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JACK LIGHTFOOT SNOWED-UP OR LOST IN THE TRACKLESS CANADIAN WILDERNESS



BY MAURICE STEVENS

As he swung his now useless gun above his head, Jack found himself wishing that he was making a home-run hit with "Old Wagon Tongue."

Publishers' Note. "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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No. 50.

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JACK LIGHTFOOT SNOWED-UP;

OR,

Lost in the Trackless Canadian Wilderness.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Jack Lightfoot, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

Tom Lightfoot, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful upon many occasions.

Lafe Lampton, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a stanch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

Mr. Denton, Jack's Canadian uncle, who thought the boys ought to see a little wild life in the great snow forests of the north before they settled down to study in earnest, with "fair Harvard" as their goal.

Musgrave, a reliable Indian guide, to whom the signs of the wilderness were as easily read as the pages of a printed book are to a student.

CHAPTER I.

AN UGLY TENANT.

"Well, Jack, what shall we do first?"

It was with this question that Lafe Lampton addressed Jack Lightfoot, when both boys fairly had awakened to a realization of their serious situation.

The nature of this situation was one to have alarmed the stoutest heart, and what had befallen the two boys may be told in a nutshell.

Only the vast Canadian wilderness was around them, in the very heart of which they had lost their way. Each moment the snow was falling faster and adding to the sheet of white that already deeply covered the earth. The light of the late afternoon was beginning to wane, and, in less than an hour, dusk must fall, and then the night darkness.

While trailing a giant moose, which now lay dead in the snow some twenty yards away, Jack and Lafe had become widely separated from their fellow hunters. These were Mr. Joseph Denton, an uncle of Jack

Lightfoot, by whom he, and Lafe, and Tom had been invited upon a hunting trip in Canada. With him was Tom Lightfoot, also an Indian guide named Musgrave, these three having taken another direction from Jack and Lafe, who later had followed the moose for several miles, overtaking and killing him.

In pursuing this animal, which they had just slain, Jack and Lafe had become separated several miles from their friends above mentioned; and both now realized that the approaching darkness and the rapidly increasing snow-storm not only would prevent them from retracing their own trail back to the camp, but would also so obliterate the tracks left by their snowshoes that their companions could not possibly follow and locate them.

Yet both boys had, as previously narrated, courageously resolved to make the best of the situation when they saw that they were indeed lost in the heart of this snow-bound Canadian forest; and it was then that Lafe Lampton asked the above question of his companion.

"Well, we certainly are lost, Lafe, and booked to make a night of it here in the woods, if not longer," replied Jack cheerfully. "So the first thing to be done is to make sure of food and shelter."

"We must have a fire, also," said Lafe. "It will be colder than thunder in the night."

"We can contrive to make a fire all right, I think, if we can find some dry stuff for a starter," cried Jack. "First of all, however, before the snow covers him, we must cut some eatable portions from the moose, enough to last us for some little time."

"That's the stuff, Jack."

"There's no knowing how long we may be snowed-up."

"I should say not."

"Let's get at it at once."

Though only a very few minutes had passed while they stood measuring their unenviable situation, the falling snow already had spread a thin mantle over the carcass of the huge moose, to which the boys now hastened.

"You see it is just as I said, Lafe," cried Jack, as he brushed the snow from the animal's side and drew his hunting-knife. "Our trail will be covered in less than ten minutes, and there is no possibility that Uncle Joe and Musgrave can follow it."

"That's right, Jack."

"We are in for a night of it, at least, so here goes to make sure of some grub, even if we can't hope for much variety."

"I'll hang onto your rifle, Jack."

Jack Lightfoot passed the weapon to his companion, then fell upon the moose with his knife.

"It's lucky that we saw Musgrave skin and carve the one we killed on the lake," said he; "or I should hardly know how to go about it."

Lafe Lampton laughed, bound to carry his best face despite the desperate circumstances, and heartily rejoined.

"Don't stand for style, Jack. Cut him up in any old way."

"You bet I will. We have no time to waste over style."

"Hack out any parts that will do for grub," added Lafe, now lending a hand, also. "Gee, but it seems a shame to spoil a fine hide like this."

"It's his or ours, Lafe."

"He's a buster, ain't he?"

"That he is, and I wish Uncle Jack might have seen him," said Jack, not for a moment stopping work during their run of conversation. "He and Musgrave may find the other one that we killed, however, and discover signs telling them that we started after this fellow."

"Sure thing they will," said Lafe cheerily. "We'll come out of the scrape all right, Jack, if we can pass this first stormy night in safety."

"We'll give that much a tremendous argument," declared Jack roundly.

Despite their encouraging remarks one to the other, however, and the cheerful spirit both were resolved to display, the boys keenly realized their desperate situation.

Lafe's eyes were frequently turned with a swift glance toward the woods through which they had come, now partly veiled by the falling snow; and secretly he heartily wished that he might suddenly behold the stalwart figure of the Indian, or Uncle Joe Denton's imposing form, heaving in sight amid the forest trees.

Jack Lightfoot wished the same not a whit less, but he knew that such good fortune was utterly impossible, and that neither of the men could have trailed them so quickly. Knowing this, also that he and Lafe now must depend upon their wisdom and ability, Jack lost not a moment in directing steps for their self-preservation.

Working rapidly with his keen hunting-knife, in a very few minutes Jack had cut from the dead moose a good supply of venison, which he laid aside in the snow, while he cleansed his hands and wrists of the animal's blood.

That done, he took his rifle from Lafe, saying heartily:

"Now grab onto your share of this, Lafe, and next we'll look for shelter."

"We won't find that so easily, I reckon," said Lafe, hastening to comply.

"We must contrive to build something."

"A lean-to?"

"Something after the same fashion," said Jack. "It's a good thing that we watched Musgrave make the one at the upper lake. We've got the idea, at least, and must contrive to put it into execution."

"That's the stuff, Jack."

"Come over this way."

"We'd better not go too far from the moose, I think, for we might run short of grub, and wish to dig him out of the snow and get some more," suggested Lafe, who was bound to safeguard against hunger as long as soul and body held together.

"I'll not go far," laughed Jack. "I wish to examine that ledge of rocks over yonder."

"In the side of that rough hill?"

"Exactly. It looks from here as if it might offer us some shelter, or, at least, enable us to construct a rough protection from the snow."

"Jiminy crickets! that's so," cried Lafe, even more hopefully.

While thus talking, the boys had been hurriedly bearing their burden of venison toward a rise of the hill somewhat to the north of the point from which they had emerged from the forest a few minutes before.

As they subsequently learned, the place where they had overtaken and killed the moose was above a small lake, which then was frozen hard and covered with several feet of snow, which had been driven in and drifted deeply during the storm of the previous night.

Jack Lightfoot rightly inferred that a lake must be there under the snow, which explained the absence of trees over so considerable a space; and he also saw that only a very little snow had fallen close under the lee of the wooded hill to the north of this clearing, where the face of a rocky bluff and the growth of pines and oaks above had shielded the ground below in the late storm.

"The wind was north last night, Lafe, the same as it is now," said he, as they hurried on. "Yonder bluff and pines form a big lee that will be much to our advantage. You can see that but little snow fell close under it last night. Out yonder is some ground that is almost bare."

"And there, Jack, is some entirely bare," cried Lafe, pointing off to the left as they drew nearer the hill. "Look at it under that overhanging ledge."

"I see it all right, Lafe."

"Just beyond it a sort of crevice makes in between the rocks, forming a sort of cave."

"By ginger, Lafe, you are right," exclaimed Jack eagerly. "I think we can use that crevice, or cave, as you call it."

To be more exact, the opening that had caught Lafe's eyes was a split in the rocky face of the hill, some six feet wide at the entrance, while within it narrowed down to a point some twelve feet from the opening.

Partly covering this deep crevice in the hill were the roots of the several oaks and pine-trees growing in the soil above, the leaves and spindles from which had fallen thickly into the crevice upon dropping from the trees, half choking it to the depth of nearly a foot.

"By gracious! it looks to me as if Providence had made that place for us, Lafe," Jack exultantly cried, when he beheld the broad opening between the rocks.

"I believe your story, Jack."

"We'll leave our venison here on the snow, where it's perfectly clean, and get to work and build a shelter before it comes dark."

"That's the stuff," cried Lafe. "We still have a good half-hour."

"That crevice is choked with dead leaves and wood, some of which may be dry enough to burn readily."

"Sure thing."

"We'll use that to start a fire, and also clean out the place, and roof it over with fir branches and birch bark."

"That will knock a lean-to sky high."

"That's what it will, Lafe," cried Jack. "And after getting a fire well started we'll gather a lot of those dead logs along here under the lee. They are dry enough to burn freely, and we'll collect a supply to keep a rousing fire till morning."

"Gee whiz! this begins to look like a cinch," declared Lafe, with a laugh. "I reckon we can go it alone, Jack, as well as with that Indian."

"Stand your rifle here with mine, Lafe, and then we'll begin cleaning out that crevice."

"House-cleaning, eh?"

"That's about the size of it," laughed Jack.

He had stood his rifle under a jutting rock in the face of the bluff-like hill, where it could remain com-

paratively free from the falling snow flakes, and Lafe hastened to follow suit.

Then both boys, pulling off their woolen gloves to prevent them from being soiled or torn, started for the crevice to begin cleaning out the accumulation of twigs and leaves.

Their work and investigations up to this time had occupied less than ten minutes, and, though the storm steadily was increasing, it appeared to them to have abated somewhat, owing to their being in the lee of the woods and bluff.

"We first will clear away what little snow there is in front of the place," said Jack. "Then we can keep the leaves and wood dry that we haul out, and——"

"Hold on a bit!" exclaimed Lafe, interrupting. "Let's take off these snow-shoes, Jack, first of all."

"That's a good idea."

"We shall not go chasing anything more to-night, I'll wager, and these blooming things are a nuisance when not needed."

"All of that, Lafe," laughed Jack, as both squatted under the ledge and quickly removed their snow-shoes. "Really I think we shall pass quite a comfortable night."

"You bet we will."

"I'd give a good deal if Uncle Joe and Tom could know that we are safe."

"So would I, Jack, but they'll have to wait till we show up," said Lafe, springing to his feet. "Now I feel natural under foot, and I'm going at that cave like a bull at a gate."

Jack also had removed his snow-shoes, and was at Lafe's heels when the latter reached the opening of the little cavern, which was nearer than either yet had approached.

Before either could enter it, however, there came from amid the dim shadows at the inmost part of it—a mingled snarl and howl that caused every hair on their heads to rise on end.

Both uttered an involuntary gasp of fright and recoiled as if struck by a bolt of lightning.

Then, instinctively, each ran to snatch up his rifle.

"What was it?" asked Lafe, nearly as white as the snow near-by.

"I couldn't tell," replied Jack, with his Winchester ready to fire instantly, and his gaze fixed upon the crevice some ten feet away. "I know only one thing, Lafe."

"What's that?"

"There's a mighty ugly tenant already in the house that we planned to occupy."

"Gee whiz! I guess that's right," said Lafe, with nerve returning when neither man nor beast emerged from the cavern.

"One thing more," added Jack decidedly. "The tenant, whatever it is, has got to be evicted. We want that shelter for ourselves."

"As a matter of fact, Jack, we must have it," declared Lafe.

"Must is right, Lafe. Possibly some animal has gone in there for shelter from the storm."

"It was an animal, all right; nothing human could have made such a howl as that we heard."

"Did you see him?"

"Not a sign of him. Did you?"

"I thought I saw something way in back, but I couldn't be sure," replied Jack, now glancing up at the face of the hill. "I'll tell you what we'll do, Lafe, rather than take another chance of being attacked by approaching that opening."

"What's that?"

"By climbing up the face of this low bluff we can, I feel sure, get a look down into the crevice. Then we possibly can discover what sort of a tenant is in there."

"Come on! I'm game to try it."

"Stop a bit, Lafe."

"It'll only take a minute."

"Have your hunting-knife ready, as well as your rifle," cautioned Jack, as they prepared to scale the low bluff.

"I've got it ready."

"There may also be an opening up above, which the animal can use for his exit, so we won't be caught napping. I rather suspect that it's a bear."

"Howling mackerels!"

"Are you ready?"

"You bet," assented Lafe, gripping his rifle. "An old bruin, eh?"

"I think so."

"Gee whiz! We'll have bear steaks for supper—unless the boot is on the other leg and we are served up raw!"

"Careful!"

With Lafe close at his heels, with his rifle held at drop for instant use, Jack Lightfoot began scaling the face of the low bluff.

CHAPTER II.

A FORCIBLE EVICTION.

It was less than twenty feet up the rough face of the bluff, and Jack and Lafe quickly reached the brink and clambered to the level ground above.

Here there was a thick growth of woods, and, though considerable snow had fallen under the trees, it was not so deep but that they could easily wade through it without needing their snow-shoes.

Some twelve feet away a dark, irregular break in the snow showed where the split penetrated the hill, and toward this Jack and Lafe cautiously picked their way.

Both boys held their Winchesters ready for instant use, in event of any surprise, and Jack softly whispered as they drew nearer the narrow opening in the ground:

"Quietly, Lafe! There's no knowing what may be down there."

"That's right, old man!" grunted Lafe, under his breath. "Yet an ounce of lead can do good work against almost anything."

Lafe was all courage, though sometimes he briefly lost his head.

He was unlike Jack Lightfoot in the latter respect, however, for the greater the danger the cooler Jack became.

When nearer the narrow opening mentioned they could see more plainly how curiously nature had constructed this place in which some animal evidently had sought shelter from the storm.

The upper part of the crevice was almost entirely obstructed with the huge, interlocked roots of the trees near-by, which grew almost to the brink of the soil which covered the rocky, overhanging ledge below.

Pointing to this mass of twining roots, Jack quietly remarked:

"No animal of any size can come up through there, Lafe, that's sure."

"We're safe enough against any attack from that direction," nodded Lafe. "Let's see what we can discover."

Now stooping over the crevice, both boys tried to peer down between the roots.

Only the dark interior below could be seen, with the broader and lighter opening at the face of the bluff.

"I can't see a thing," muttered Lafe bluntly.

Till then not a sound had been heard from the gloom below.

The sound of Lafe's voice, however, appeared to occasion a response.

It came in the form of a half-smothered, growling, low, ugly, and threatening, as if some huge animal resented thus being disturbed.

"Gee, that's no kitten!" gasped Lafe, as the sound caused both boys to start quickly and draw back.

"It's a bear," Jack declared. "That's what it is."

"Can you see him?"

"Not yet," whispered Jack, again bending lower.

"Nor can I."

"It's as dark as a cave way in there, and the brute must be as far from the entrance as he can get. When our eyes become accustomed to looking in the darkness we may be able to discover where he——"

"Howling mackerels! I see him," Lafe excitedly interrupted. "Look through this hole, Jack. You can see the glow of his eyes in the darkness."

Jack crept round to the larger hole which Lafe had discovered, and crouched to peer through it.

In the midst of the darkness below, well into the depths of this natural cavern, two round glowing spots some three inches apart plainly indicated that Lafe had spoken the truth.

Though the growling still continued, and presently began to increase in volume, Jack Lightfoot placed his face nearly into the hole, the better to see through the darkness.

Now he could discern, crouching against the inmost wall of the place, a huge dark figure, twice the size of an ordinary Newfoundland dog.

There no longer could be any mistaking the animal. It was, as Jack Lightfoot already had conjectured, a large black bear.

"I see him plainly," he whispered, drawing back from the opening.

"A bear?"

"Sure!"

"Gee whiz! this looks like business," cried Lafe, beginning to quiver with excitement.

"Keep cool!"

"We must get him out of there. We want that place for ourselves, old man. And it'll be dark inside of half-an-hour."

"We'll get him out all right, either dead or alive," muttered Jack, with a determined light in his keen, dark eyes.

"What are you doing?"

Jack had begun to cautiously thrust the barrel of his Winchester into the opening through which he had been gazing.

"I'm going to try to kill him through this hole," he hurriedly explained.

"Jiminy crickets! there'll be music and something doing, Jack, if you only succeed in wounding the brute."

"I can see his eyes quite plainly," whispered Jack, now kneeling to steady himself. "I'm going to try to send a bullet between them."

"That will finish him, all right, if you can do it," nodded Lafe approvingly.

"Have your rifle ready, in case I miss."

"I'm ready! Holy smoke, hear him growl!"

The noise from below had become a prolonged, furious snarl, rather than a growl.

Old bruin evidently had become suspicious, feeling that designs upon his comfort were in active operation.

The sounds above, the face at the hole toward which his glowing eyes were directed, the thrusting of a rifle barrel through the aperture and pointing straight at him, these were more than bruin could calmly endure.

With a sudden terrific roar, before Jack Lightfoot could draw a bead on him, the bear sprang up and rushed out of the cave, obviously bent upon putting up a fight of his own to retain not only his whole skin, but also the shelter from which these intruders meant to oust him.

Jack drew back his rifle and leaped up like a flash.

"Look out, Lafe," he shouted, turning toward the brink of the ledge. "He's coming out! Be ready to plug him wherever he may show."

"Did he go out?" yelled Lafe, wildly springing to his feet.

"Like a whirlwind."

"Which way did he turn?"

"I couldn't see," cried Jack, with eyes and ears on the alert. "He has stopped growling, and he may be crouching under——"

"Where are you going?"

"To look over the ledge," cried Jack. "He may be crouching on the ground below."

"Hold on!" yelled Lafe apprehensively. "If you slip over that edge you'll be a gone goose for sure."

"I'll not slip, Lafe."

While he replied Jack crept nearer the brink of the snow-covered ledge, bent upon looking over to see if he could discover the bear below the overhanging rocks.

He hardly had dropped to his knee near the edge, however, when a terrific yell came from Lafe.

"Here he comes, Jack!" he roared. "Look out for

yourself! Here he comes up the very place where we climbed."

Jack scrambled to his feet, and turned to the place mentioned.

The head of the bear was just showing above the snowy brink.

Lafe's rifle already was at his shoulder, and his eye looking along the barrel.

"Hold on!" shrieked Jack. "Wait till you get a good mark, Lafe! Wait till you get a good mark!"

He spoke too late, however, for the thundering report of Lafe's weapon drowned most of his words.

Jack knew that a bear's head makes a very bad target, for, when the animal is moving, it is in almost constant motion, and the frontal bones are so sharp and hard that, unless the marksman makes a dead-center shot, the bullet will glance off and do but little harm.

When thus attacked, or even if badly wounded, moreover, a bear will put up the wickedest kind of a fight rather than resort to flight.

For this reason Jack wanted to kill the brute with the first shot, thus ending the immediate danger, but the result of Lafe's fire was just what he anticipated.

The bullet struck the animal's frontal bone laterally, glancing quickly off, and it did not so much as stun him.

It brought from bruin a roar that made the woods ring, however, as he clambered up to the level, snow-covered ground.

The moment he gained a footing and beheld the two boys, moreover, he reared himself erect for an instant—a huge beast, shaggy and grim, with his small eyes blazing fiercely, and his long, red tongue lolling from between his sharp, white teeth and drawn lips.

In that one instant of mingled curiosity and surprise, however, old bruin sealed his own doom.

Jack Lightfoot saw the opportunity presented, for a more perfect mark could hardly have been had, and his rifle leaped to his shoulder.

Bang!

There came a spiteful flash of flame from the black muzzle, and the bullet sped straight to its mark, tearing through the beast's shaggy breast and splitting his heart in twain.

With a single gasping snort the animal fell to one side, then rolled like a mass of flesh and hair over the edge of the low bluff and to the ground below, turning the white snow to crimson wherever he touched.

"Hurrah!" yelled Lafe, rushing to the edge to look over. "I guess that settled him."

"I think there's no doubt of it," laughed Jack, hastening to join him.

"Let's go down there."

"Wait a bit," cried Jack, more discreetly. "First let's make sure there ain't more of them in that crevice."

"A good idea," assented Lafe.

A careful examination above the roots and through the holes plainly indicated that the place was now vacant, however, and the boys no longer demurred over returning to the lee of the ledge.

The huge bear lay dead in the snow, and, after a brief examination of the carcass, Jack proceeded to enter the crevice from which he had been so successfully evicted.

"We have no time to waste, Lafe," he declared. "We must have this place cleaned out and a shelter made before dark."

"That's right, Jack, and enough wood collected to keep a fire going until morning. There's no knowing what sort of visitors we may have before daylight."

"True."

"Mebbe the mate of that bear may show up, Jack, and take a turn at ousting us out of these quarters."

"I don't think so, Lafe."

"For what reason?"

"From what I have read of the habits of the black bear," replied Jack, as they set to work clearing the dead leaves and dry twigs from the crevice; "they are not much given to prowling about in the winter months. As I understand it, they go into a den or cave when the cold and snow come on, and are not frequently seen outside of it."

"This may have been that old fellow's den," remarked Lafe.

"I don't find any indications warranting that belief," said Jack. "The leaves in here are not matted down very much, as if a bed had long been made of them, nor are there any signs of food having been eaten here."

"That's right, too."

"I am more inclined to think that that bear may have a den in some other locality, and that he was out nosing around for something to eat before the storm came on, which may have driven him to taking temporary shelter in here."

"Jiminy! I hope that's right," said Lafe hopefully. "I'd just as soon not receive a visit from his mate."

"We'll not expect it, Lafe, even though we keep ourselves prepared for it," laughed Jack.

While thus talking the boys had hurriedly scraped

all of the leaves and twigs outside of the entrance, heaping them up against the rocky wall at one side, where they were protected from the falling snow by the jutting portion of the ledge.

This revealed the bare ground, which was comparatively dry, while the walls within appeared to be parts of a huge split rock, which in course of time and terrestrial changes had fallen gradually apart, forming a considerable opening.

From six to eight feet above were the twined and interlocked roots of the trees above the ledge, making almost a perfect roof above the open space, yet through which the boys could see daylight in many places.

"We must go up there again and roof the place in so it won't leak," said Jack, when the leaves had been cleaned out. "If the storm should last very long, the snow would accumulate up there, and the heat from our fire would cause it to melt down on us."

"How can we accomplish it?"

"I saw some birch-trees up there," replied Jack. "We'll rip off enough bark to lay a roof, Lafe, and hold it in place with some fir branches."

"That's the stuff! Come on!"

"We'll carry our rifles with us," said Jack. "I'll take no needless chances."

Once more the boys clambered up the ledge, where they stood their weapons against a convenient tree while at work.

When out of the lee both saw that it was snowing harder, and that the north wind was increasing in violence, and they now redoubled their exertions.

Fortunately there were some birch-trees near-by, from which they quickly ripped numerous broad strips of bark with their hunting-knives. These they laid over the entire length of the top of the crevice, lapping one strip of bark over the other, and covering the whole with a pile of fir branches, hurriedly cut from the nearest trees.

Next a number of smaller boughs of the same kind, which so grow that they may be lain quite flat and compact on the ground, were pitched over the edge of the ledge to be used for bedding in the shelter.

"We'll dry these at the fire before taking them inside," said Jack, as the last was tossed to the ground below.

"We ought to start a fire, Jack," said Lafe.

"We'll do it in a few minutes," nodded Jack, who then was hacking off a low pine branch from a tree near the brink. "I first want to run this branch out over the edge of the ridge, so that part of it will hang down over the entrance of our shelter. That will pre-

vent any snow from blowing in upon us, even if the wind should change."

"Gee, that's a good scheme, Jack!"

This work, together with that previously done, had taken nearly half-an-hour, and daylight was rapidly waning.

Taking their rifles, both boys now clambered down to the lee again, where Jack threw one of the fir branches over the dead bear and placed a couple of large rocks upon it.

Lafe meantime collected a heap of dry leaves and twigs on a spot a few feet in front of the shelter, and, after several ineffectual attempts to strike a match, he finally succeeded in starting the fire.

Some dry wood from under the ledge was hurriedly added, and soon the crackling flames were soaring upward.

Next both boys gathered from close under the lee all of the dry logs and wood of any size that they could find, which was hurriedly placed just within the entrance of the shelter, until they had a pile breast high against one of the walls.

"That will last us till morning, all right," cried Jack, as both stood breathing hard after their hurried labors.

The glow of perfect health was in the cheeks of both, however, and their eyes were bright with the excitement inspired by the novelty of their situation. Both ignored, if they had not entirely forgotten, even, the desperate side of it, in the courage and determination with which they had met it.

"Till morning!" echoed Lafe, estimating the huge pile of wood. "Jiminy, there's enough here to last two days."

"Well, we want enough to outlast this storm," said Jack. "Now bring in a small fir branch to lay that venison on, while I lug it in here."

"I'm with you, Jack."

"There may be wolves about who might want it, if we left it out there too long."

"Heaven help the wolf that tries to make off with any of our grub," growled Lafe, with a ludicrous grimace. "I could see his finish."

It took but few minutes to bring in the several huge chunks of venison, which were placed in a corner formed by the pile of wood; and then the entire lot of fir branches, which had been stood against the ledge to dry in the heat from the fire, were brought in and spread upon the ground.

Before the last steps had been taken, however, the dusk had deepened into darkness, that intense dark-

ness of a stormy night in the heart of a vast forest, when sky and trees and falling flakes are lost in an impenetrable gloom.

Yet over the gathering snow for a considerable distance from the lee that sheltered the blazing fire, there was cast a bright, ruddy glow, in which the dropping flakes could be seen, in which the white mantle covering the earth glistened and gleamed as if studded with tiny gems; a glow that lent an atmosphere of warmth and weird beauty to the wildness of the scene, despite all dangers and privations—the glow of this solitary camp-fire in the heart of the Canadian wilderness.

CHAPTER III.

UNWELCOME VISITORS.

"Gee! but this does taste good," declared Lafe, with a resounding smack of his chops. "I never ate anything that tasted better. And it's dead snug and comfortable in here, all right, Jack."

Lafe was seated cross-legged, Turk fashion, on a pile of dry, sweet-scented fir branches at one side of the shelter.

Jack Lightfoot sat in like position directly opposite.

Both boys had on the end of a pointed stick, in lieu of a fork, a chunk of steaming hot venison, juicy and dripping.

On two other sticks in the ground near the fire two other chunks were sizzling, for Lafe had declared that, having only one course at this fashionable camp dinner, they must have plenty of it.

The boys had accomplished all that mortals could have accomplished under such circumstances.

Their shelter was almost perfect.

Not a drop of water fell from the roof, not a flake of snow could find its way under the drooping branches that hung partly over the entrance.

The cheerful glow from the fire a few feet away outside lighted the interior brightly, while the heat made outer garments absolutely uncomfortable.

Both boys had removed their woolen wraps and coats, and yet felt as warm as toast, as the saying is.

Away up above the north wind could be heard blowing noisily through the lofty pines, and occasionally a severe blast would cause the trunks to sway and creak, when the sound would be transmitted even down through the roots just above the heads of these campers, awaking a weird suggestion that somebody from the upper world was trying to telegraph down to them.

Out across the ruddy glare of light beyond the lee,

the falling snow could be seen, the white flakes whirling dizzily at times, chasing one another earthward as if in mad frenzy, and all the while adding to the thick mantle that nature was spreading over Mother Earth.

But there was neither snow, nor wind, nor cold in the shelter occupied by Lafe and Jack Lightfoot.

"This does taste good, Lafe, for a fact," Jack admitted, in reply to his companion's remark.

"Gee!" grunted Lafe; "that's no name for it."

"I believe your story."

"I was as hungry as that dead bear out yonder. I s'pose he'd have made a square meal of the two of us, if we failed to get the best of him."

"I think likely," smiled Jack.

"We'll have a steak off him for our breakfast."

"That will be a good scheme. It will give variety to our table."

"Table!" cried Lafe, laughing. "Gee, that's pretty good, Jack! It's all I can do to keep from dropping my chunk of grub on the floor, say nothing of a table."

"Don't try to eat it while it's so hot. You've got time enough."

"That's right, too. No hurry to catch a train, eh?"

"Not much, Lafe. I wish there was."

"Humph! This is good enough for me, Jack, for a change. I'll bet we come out of it all right, even if we are snowed-up just at present."

"I think I'd place my money that way," nodded Jack. "Things don't look quite as bad as when we shot that moose."

"I should say not. Gee, this water is pretty flat, isn't it?"

"It beats no water, Lafe," laughed Jack, who had melted some snow in a pocket drinking-cup which he had with him.

"That's what it does," admitted Lafe, rising to get his second spit of venison. "Want yours, Jack?"

"I think I can eat another."

Lafe brought them both in, and again the boys fell to on the savory morsels.

"It's snowing harder than ever outside," said he, as he reentered the shelter. "It's lucky our fire is well under the lee, or the snowflakes would put it out. They look as big as milk-cans coming down out there."

"There's no danger of our fire going out," said Jack, with a glance at it. "It has melted all the snow within ten feet or more, and I have guarded it against any flow of water toward it. The fire will last as long as we keep putting on wood."

"We may both fall asleep."

"We must guard against that," replied Jack, shaking

his head. "The fire is our only protection from the cold, and the approach of any wild beasts that otherwise might come prowling around here."

"That's right, too."

"We must keep the fire going at all hazards."

"We will do the same as on shipboard."

"Keep a watch?"

"Sure."

"That's the only safe way," nodded Jack.

"We can take turns at it, all right."

"I will do so until after midnight, as near as I can judge," said Jack; "and you then must relieve me until morning."

"That suits me," assented Lafe. "Jiminy! I feel better now, I have got my stomach filled."

"So do I, Lafe. Do you want to turn in?"

"Not yet, Jack," exclaimed Lafe. "Gosh! I don't feel tired. Let's talk it over awhile longer. I wonder what Tom and Uncle Joe are doing, and that Indian."

"Worrying their heads off," said Jack, quickly becoming more grave.

"Mebbe they are out in the storm hunting for us," suggested Lafe.

Jack quickly shook his head.

"No, they are not," said he. "They are back in the camp, fretting their very lives out. They know that they could accomplish nothing by undertaking a search after us on such a night as this."

"I guess that's right, Jack."

"All they can do is to wait till the storm ends, and live in a hope that we'll be able to weather it in some way."

"I reckon Tom will encourage them in that hope, don't you?"

"He should, Lafe, to say the least," nodded Jack. "Tom knows of what kind of stuff we're made, and that we're not the kind to go under without a struggle."

"You bet we're not."

"Yet all hands will feel mighty anxious till we return."

"That they will," assented Lafe. "That suggests another thing, Jack. How the dickens are we to find our way back to the camp? Have you any idea of the direction?"

"No definite idea, Lafe," said Jack, with a rather dubious smile. "We made so many crooks and turns in coming here that I'm all at sea."

"So am I, Jack, and we'll take pretty long chances of being worse off, I fear, if we go too far from this

shelter before we get some definite idea of where we are heading."

"We will not do that, Lafe," Jack promptly declared. "We can last here for some time, and we must not venture too far on our first trip out."

"That's my idea."

"When the storm clears, Lafe, we can put in a morning trying to find the back track, and if unsuccessful we'll return here in the afternoon."

"That will be a good scheme."

"To prevent our getting lost again, we'll blaze the trees over the course we take, if necessary."

"That'll serve us all right,"

"While you are resting," added Jack; "I'll try to figure out, if possible, in what direction the camp should lie. Of one thing we're sure."

"What is that?"

"We ought to be able to reach it in a trip of six hours, providing we hit on the right direction."

"Surely," exclaimed Lafe. "We didn't leave the camp till noon, and we were here before dark."

"Besides," said Jack; "we spent some time in looking for moose tracks, and frequently were not hurrying. So we can safely figure that a trip of five or six hours in the right direction will bring us to the camp."

"Less than that, if anything."

For half-an-hour longer the two boys sat discussing this and other matters, both feeling somewhat drowsy under the heat that came stealing in from the burning logs, and Jack finally broke off their discussion by saying:

"You'd better turn in now, Lafe, and get your share of sleep. I'll keep watch for a few hours, and then wake you up and take my turn at it."

"All right, Jack," assented Lafe readily. "Only don't let me take more than my share."

"I'll look out for that," laughed Jack.

"You know what an old Rip Van Winkle I am," added Lafe. "I'd sleep more than forty years, say nothing of twenty, if nobody woke me up."

"I'll wake you up, all right," said Jack. "Let loose, now, and get to snoring."

Lafe needed no further bidding. Stretching himself on the couch of sweet fir branches, with his feet toward the fire and his head upon a pillow made by rolling his coat, he was soon sound asleep, and snoring quite as loudly as Jack Lightfoot could possibly have desired.

"He is getting some much needed rest," thought Jack. "We'll both wake fresher in the morning, and

in better shape for the labor of finding our way to the camp."

For a long time he sat musing over the situation, and trying to estimate in what direction the camp should lie.

He was sufficiently versed in woodcraft to guard against one sometimes fatal mistake—that of going too far, when lost, from the location last remembered as being familiar. As long as that is kept within reach, a bad matter may not necessarily become worse, and it always serves for a new starting point when vain search has been made in various directions for the right course.

So Jack resolved to keep this shelter within reach, let come what might, till he could definitely determine the proper way out of their difficulty.

Suddenly, while he sat musing, the far-away howl of a wolf was borne to his ears by the night air.

He easily recognized the mournful note of this vagabond of the forest, for he had heard them when camping in the lean-to on the lower lake; but little attention had been paid to them then, so Jack now ignored the dismal sound.

Presently he heard others, however, evidently much nearer, and he reached farther into the shelter to take his rifle from against the wall, to make sure that the chamber was fully charged.

"They may have scented the venison we were cooking, or see the glow from our fire," he said to himself, while Lafe snored on in blissful ignorance of the sounds. "I hope they'll keep away from here, the brutes."

Yet all the while the howls of the wolves were sounding nearer, until finally Jack heard them in the open space a hundred yards from the shelter, where they appeared to have gathered in considerable number.

"They may be at that dead moose," he said to himself, gazing out through the darkness. "They must have scented the carcass, and may be trying to dig it from under the snow."

Owing to the exceeding heat from the fire, which made the shelter uncomfortable when burning briskly, Jack had allowed the flames to wane for a time.

Now he arose and stepped out and threw on a couple of fresh logs, however, which sent the flames rising higher and cast a shower of sparks into the midnight air.

As he was about to return, glancing again toward the dark clearing, where the snarling and howling had steadily increased, he suddenly saw in the gloom just beyond the glow from the fire a semicircle of small

bright spots, in pairs, and back of each pair was a dark motionless figure outlined against the snow.

For a moment Jack felt a chill creep through his blood.

They were the eyes and figures of wolves, which had gathered as near as they dared to the fire and light at which they stood gazing, or at him, with hungry eyes and jaws hanging.

"They'll be after that bear next," Jack muttered, as his nerve quickly returned. "I'll try to drive them away."

He went into the shelter and got his rifle, then stepped forth again and hurled a blazing brand at the circle of dark forms.

Most of the brand whirled in a blazing curve through the air and fell sputtering upon the snow in the very midst of the gathering of wolves.

They scattered like frightened sheep, darting away through the darkness, and snarling and howling louder than ever.

A part of the brand flew to one side, however, and lodged at the base of a dead pine close under the lee, and within a few feet of where the carcass of the slain bear was lying.

In a moment the small dry needles of the pine lying in the cavity, on which scarcely any snow had fallen, were all ablaze, the red light adding to the lurid wildness of the midnight scene.

At the same moment Jack heard a series of fierce snarls nearly beside him.

Half-a-score of wolves had already scented the dead bear, and were trying to get at the carcass when Jack threw the firebrand, the broken part of which had flown in their direction.

Like the others they scattered instantly, yet several of the largest sprang toward Jack, fierce with mingled fright and hunger.

They were nearly upon him before he noticed them, and his only warning of their nearness was the fierce snarls with which they sprang in his direction.

Though thrilled with alarm, so sudden was the attack, Jack turned like a flash and dropped the barrel of his Winchester.

He fired without taking aim, yet the bullet crashed into the head of one of the approaching brutes, and laid him dead on the snow.

Jack had no time to fire again, however, for several of the angry wolves were almost upon him.

Springing quickly to one side, he reversed his rifle and grasped it by the barrel, whirling it above his head.

Crash!

It fell with a resounding thud on the head of the nearest wolf, and sent him sprawling and howling over the snow.

Up the weapon rose again, and like a flash another was put down and out.

Again it rose and fell—crash, bang, crash!

As he swung the stout gun above his head Jack found himself wishing that he were making a home-run hit with "Old Wagon Tongue."

While several of the uninjured beasts were still fierce to attack him, however, there came another sound which quickly caused them to scatter.

It was the rapid reports of Lafe Lampton's repeater, and with every report a lead bullet went crashing among the hungry beasts.

"I guess a few of those will settle them," he cried, as the last of the wounded wolves went howling away, leaving three dead on the snow some feet from the fire. "Why didn't you wake me up, Jack?"

"I had no opportunity until after the circus began, and then my rifle evidently did so," replied Jack, who was uninjured, barring a few slight scratches. "I didn't expect any attack from them."

"Had the fire gone low?"

"Somewhat, Lafe, as the shelter was becoming too warm."

"I should say so. It's like an oven in there."

"Well, I'm not hurt, and there's no harm done," said Jack. "We'll chuck these carcasses to one side and keep a brighter fire for the rest of the night. That will keep the brutes at a respectful distance."

"They appear to be at that dead moose," said Lafe, listening to the snarling and howling in the near distance.

"That's just what they are at," replied Jack. "The fire will now keep them away, so now go and turn in again."

Lafe offered no objection, and was soon soundly sleeping again, which Jack allowed him to do till nearly three o'clock.

Then he awoke him and took his turn, while Lafe kept watch.

Barring their incessant howling, there was no further trouble from the wolves, yet twice Lafe went out to watch them and to note the extent of the storm. Along about five o'clock he found that the snow had changed to a chilly rain, and that the temperature was rapidly rising.

This led him to hope that it might come pleasant

by morning, a hope that was almost verified before the first gray streak of dawn appeared in the east.

For rifts in the clouds were revealing stars, and soon the glory of the morning sunrise appeared through the snow-laden trees of the silent forest.

CHAPTER IV.

CLEVER HEAD-WORK.

"Jiminy crickets!" exclaimed Jack Lightfoot. "Here's the very thing we need."

"What's that?" cried Lafe, starting up from the fire at which he was cooking their breakfast.

It consisted of the same old single course—moose meat.

Upon looking at the carcass of the bear, which the wolves had rent and torn the previous night, both boys had decided that it did not look inviting, that bear steak would not be palatable under the circumstances, and so they had fallen back upon the venison safely preserved in the shelter.

The sun had risen above the trees, and was shining brightly from a cloudless sky.

The storm had entirely passed, and the morning was clear and cold, with the mercury well below freezing.

The slight fall of rain, with which the storm had ended just before the sudden drop in temperature, had settled the light snow and made a surface which now was frozen hard, amply strong enough to stand the weight of a man, and made snow-shoes entirely needless.

Jack Lightfoot, when he uttered the above exclamation, was standing with his back to the shelter, examining a small object that he had drawn from one corner of his vest pocket.

"What is it?" cried Lafe.

"The compass which Uncle Joe loaned me that first day in camp, when we boys went out for caribou," said Jack triumphantly.

"The day we went to the great barren?"

"Exactly," cried Jack. "Jupiter, but this is a great find!"

"Didn't you remember having it?"

"Certainly not. I found it only by chance, way down in one corner of my pocket. Now, Lafe, old man, I think I can see my way back to camp."

"By doing a little land navigation?"

"Precisely."

"Let's figure it out——"

"No, no, breakfast first, Lafe," interrupted Jack, slipping the cherished compass back into his pocket.

"We'll first have something to eat and then do the figuring on a full stomach."

"Full of snow-water and moose meat," roared Lafe, laughing loudly. "Howling mackerels! but isn't that a layout?"

"It beats going hungry, Lafe, by a wide margin," cried Jack, joining in the laugh.

"That's right."

Naturally enough the favorable change in the weather was not without effect upon them. The sight of the sun and clear sky, the smell of the crisp, invigorating air, the discovery of a frozen crust on the deep snow, which would make rapid walking comparatively easy—all combined to inspire the boys with renewed hopes of a speedy end of their isolation and privations.

In half-an-hour breakfast was prepared and eaten, and Jack then proceeded to figure out the best course to take in order to reach the camp.

"We can get at it at once, Lafe, there being no dishes to wash," said he, laughing.

"We'd better save this spit, however, in case we return," grinned Lafe.

"I am in hopes we shall not be obliged to return," said Jack.

"Gee, I shall feel kind of bad at leaving this shelter, for all that."

"Let me have one of them," said Jack. "I can use it for a pencil."

"Pencil?"

"To mark out the course we shall take."

With a piece of wood Jack had been clearing a small plot of level ground, left bare of snow by the heat from the fire.

"Is that space to serve as a blackboard?" chuckled Lafe, now watching his movements.

"It will answer the purpose."

"Sure thing it will, Jack. Going to draw a map, eh?"

"I merely am noting the relative position, as nearly as I can judge, of certain things which may aid us to find the camp."

Jack had placed the compass on the small plot of ground, nearly at his feet, and had taken a position directly south of it, the needle pointing straight away from him toward the north.

"We know in a general way that we are far north of the camp, Lafe, by the course we took when leaving it day before yesterday," said Jack. "So I'll place the compass here for a starting point."

"Letting it represent the camp, eh?"

"Exactly," nodded Jack. "When we left the camp that afternoon we traveled nearly northwest through the forest, to the point where we met Musgrave returning from his search after moose tracks."

"That's right, Jack," assented Lafe, drawing nearer and crouching down to watch his companion's movements. "I remember it distinctly, Jack. Uncle Joe remarked that the guide's trail led nearly northwest."

"So far so good, then," said Jack. "Now another point. We must have traveled all of three miles before we met Musgrave returning. So I will put this pebble here, three inches to the northwest of the compass."

"I see the point," nodded Lafe. "You are placing it on a scale of an inch to a mile."

"Precisely."

"Go on, Jack."

"After meeting Musgrave," proceeded Jack, "our course changed to one nearly due north."

"Are you sure about that?"

"Fairly so. I remember of looking back and noticing that we had left our trail at an angle, and I now am comparatively sure of the direction we took."

"Call it due north, anyway," said Lafe, with characteristic indifference.

"I wish to be as accurate as possible, Lafe, for there is a good deal depending on it," Jack rejoined with a head-shake.

"That's right, too. Let her go."

"While following the moose tracks with Musgrave," continued Jack, "I figure we covered at least four miles. So I will place this twig four inches due north of the pebble."

"The twig stands for Musgrave, eh?"

"It stands for the place at which we parted from Musgrave and the others, when we undertook to skirt the valley and rejoin them at the pine-covered hill which Musgrave had pointed out."

"I see," nodded Lafe.

"They then bore off to the northwest, Lafe, while you and I took a northeast direction."

"That's right, Jack. There can be no doubt about that."

"We strayed a long distance from the proper course, however, though in a general way our direction was nearly north, or a little east of north, up to the point where we killed the first moose."

"True."

"And we must have walked about three miles."

"As far as that, Jack, surely."

"We will call it three miles, Lafe, and stick this spit in the ground for a marker three inches north of the twig."

"Good enough!" laughed Lafe. "The moose we killed ought to be represented by a spit, since some of the last moose was cooked on one."

Jack laughed lightly at the joke and continued.

"From that point, Lafe, we began to pursue that second moose," said he. "As well as I now can judge from the time taken, we ran about three miles after him, and in a northeasterly direction. I may be a little in error as to the last, but we will assume it to be nearly right. So this stone shall represent our present location, three inches northeast of the spit."

"Gee, that's plain enough!" exclaimed Lafe, with an approving nod.

"Now I will draw a line from one marker to the other," said Jack, "and will estimate both the distance and the general direction."

"Jiminy crickets! but you've got a pretty good block on your shoulders," said Lafe. "I'll bet you get it down fine."

"I shall try to be as accurate as possible, Lafe, for I am going to stake all on these calculations," said Jack decidedly.

"Do you mean that you are going to quit the shelter for good, Jack, and strike out to find the camp at the lake?"

"That's exactly what I mean, Lafe."

"Whether we get lost again or not, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Put it there, old man," cried Lafe, thrusting out his hand. "I'm with you let come what may."

"We have weathered one very bad night, Lafe," said Jack, as they heartily shook hands. "At the very worst, we should be able to weather a good one, as this promises to be. I don't think we shall have to pass more than one more night in the woods, for I believe that two days' search will enable us to find the camp."

"I think so, too, Jack, and feel willing to take any chances that you will."

"Now to compute the distance and decide upon the general direction," said Jack, resuming his study of the plan.

"Let her go," nodded Lafe, while both again crouched over the plot of earth.

"From the compass to the pebble is three inches; from that to the twig is four inches; from the twig to the spit is three inches, and from the spit to the stone representing our shelter is three inches."

"Making a total of thirteen inches," said Lafe.

"Or, in other words," added Jack, "we estimate that we traveled thirteen miles from the camp."

"That's right."

"Now note the general direction as indicated by the compass," Jack went on. "First northwest three miles, then nearly due north seven miles, then northeast about three miles."

"Exactly."

"That would fix this shelter of ours a little to the east of north from the camp, at a distance of about thirteen miles."

"By ginger!" exclaimed Lafe, with much enthusiasm. "I'll bet that pretty nearly hits the nail on the head."

Jack Lightfoot remained more cool and considerate, however, and was resolved to make no leap in the dark, through overconfidence in his theory.

"It will come somewhere near it, Lafe," he replied, rising to his feet. "And if it were perfectly accurate, our homeward course would lie in precisely the opposite direction, or a little west of south."

"Certainly."

"I am resolved to keep on the safe side, however, and shall allow for probable error in my calculations, even if we are thereby obliged to travel a greater distance."

"What do you mean?" inquired Lafe.

"I will explain," said Jack, taking up the compass. "We know that the camp is located near the head of a narrow lake which lies nearly north and south."

"Sure."

"If we were to shape a course exactly in accord with my calculations we might go so far, either to the east or west of the lake, that we should fail to discover it. In that case we might wander as far from the camp in some other direction, as we now are in this."

"That's true, Jack."

"I have a better plan, however."

"What is that?"

"Instead of traveling on a line a little west of south, we will bear sufficiently far to the west to be absolutely sure that the lake will lie to the east of us, after we have tramped fifteen miles."

"Why fifteen miles?" demanded Lafe. "The distance was only thirteen."

"I am adding two miles, Lafe, so as to be equally certain of reaching a point below the northern head of the lake," explained Jack. "Then by moving directly east, we necessarily must reach the west shore of the lake."

"Jiminy! that's so. I see the point now."

"Unless we plan to get below it, or south of the head of the lake, we might go north of it and miss it entirely when we shape our course east," Jack rightly reasoned.

"Sure thing. That's plain enough."

"And in that case, Lafe, we should be even worse off than we now are. For not only we still should be lost, but we should then have absolutely nothing reliable on which to base further calculations."

"That's true," cried Lafe heartily. "Add the two miles by all means and bear far enough west to insure being on that side of the lake after covering fifteen miles."

"I will make sure of that, Lafe," said Jack confidently.

"How are we to tell when we have covered fifteen miles?"

"We will estimate it by setting our pace at about four miles an hour. A tramp of four hours will then have covered the distance, and if we have done even more no harm can result, providing we are west of the lake. For we must strike it then by going due east from that point."

"That appears to be open and shut."

"Now what do you say?"

"About what?"

"Are you willing to adopt the plan and take chances?"

"Willing!" exclaimed Lafe, with a laugh. "You bet I am, Jack, and the sooner we start the better I'll like it."

"That settles it, Lafe, but we must not rush things," replied Jack. "First we must cook enough of this venison to last over to-morrow, in case our calculations are wrong and we are obliged to camp out another night."

"Gee, that's so! I never thought of that."

"Probably because you are not hungry immediately after breakfast," laughed Jack.

"I reckon that's the reason."

"So get the spits to work, Lafe, and we'll prepare the grub, such as it is," added Jack. "Then we will make ready to do the fifteen miles."

"We'll do it at a canter, Jack," cried Lafe, hastening to comply. "I never felt more like it in my life, and the crust on the snow will make the going dead easy."

"Particularly, Lafe, after the sun softens the surface a little."

It still was early morning, the boys having risen with the sun, and at the end of half-an-hour they had

cooked what venison they thought they might require and tied in two compact bundles for carrying.

Their garments, which had been much wet in the recent storm, now were completely dry, and their footwear in good condition.

From the dead bear each clipped the claws for reminders of their adventure with old bruin, which were about all that remained of him worth having.

Their snow-shoes were tied across their backs, as being the easiest way of carrying them; and, shortly after eight o'clock, with their trusty rifles under their arms, they were ready to start from the shelter.

Both stood outside of it, and looked in for the last time.

"It seems kind of bad to leave it, eh, Jack?" remarked Lafe, a bit soberly. "It has served us well, I'm jiggered if it hasn't."

"That's right, Lafe, so it has," assented Jack, nodding; then he turned abruptly away and pointed to the southwest, adding heartily: "But there's another and better camp yonder, and anxious hearts praying for our return."

"Right you are!" cried Lafe, with a ringing shout. "So good-by, old shelter! We're off for the better camp!"

CHAPTER V.

ON THE BACK TRACK.

The southerly course taken by Jack Lightfoot and Lafe led the boys to the spot where they had slain the giant moose two evenings before.

As they inferred, the wolves had dug the carcass from the snow during the previous night, and the boys were a little startled when they beheld it.

All that remained of the moose was a skeleton, literally stripped of the last vestige of flesh, and a pair of spreading antlers that measured four feet from tine to tine.

"Gee, I wish we could take those antlers with us, for the shed-room at Cranford!" exclaimed Lafe, while they briefly paused to view the ravaged bones left in the blood-stained pit which the wolves had made around the carcass.

"They are grand, Lafe, for a fact," admitted Jack. "It would be impossible to carry them, however, for they must weight between forty and fifty pounds."

"All of that, Jack."

"There are others as splendid as those, however, and I'll wager that we do not return to Cranford empty-handed."

"Not if we know it, eh?"

"Not by a long chalk," declared Jack confidently. "Come on! There are fifteen miles to be covered before noon."

At the rise of the opposite hill, however, Jack paused again, and took out his compass, now retaining it in his hand for frequent consultations.

Watching the needle till it settled motionless, pointing due north, Jack shaped a course southwest by south, and stretched out his arm in that direction.

"Yonder lies our way," said he.

"Forward, then!" cried Lafe.

And they plunged into the forest together.

A more perfect time for tramping through the Canadian woods could not have been had.

Enough snow had fallen to bury the scrub and brush that ordinarily would have obstructed their progress, yet the crust of snow was so thick and hard that there was no breaking through it, which made walking both easy and enjoyable.

The towering trees were draped in white, moreover, with a mantle that glistened and gleamed in the sunlight as if studded with a myriad of tiny diamonds, the whole presenting a picture that the eyes of but few persons are privileged to view.

For upward of an hour the boys strode on and on with only an occasional remark, up-hill and down, through vista and glade, all the while maintaining a uniform stride and rate of speed.

Now and then Jack halted and consulted the compass to make sure that they did not deviate from their course, and Lafe presently remarked, after nearly an hour:

"It strikes me, Jack, that we are pretty near the place where we killed that first moose."

"Do you see anything of him?" inquired Jack, laughing.

"No, of course not," blurted Lafe. "The snow would have buried him."

"Or a pack of wolves eaten him," supplemented Jack.

"Mebbe Uncle Joe and Musgrave found him and lugged part of him to the cabin."

"Not likely," said Jack, shaking his head. "They would have missed us about that time, Lafe, and have been more concerned over finding us."

"Gee, they must be awfully haired up over our absence."

"They probably think we are dead."

"We'll give them a great surprise when we show up."

"More than that."

"We must plan some little racket on them, Jack," laughed Lafe. "When we reach the cabin——"

"You are looking too far ahead, Lafe," interposed Jack. "First we must find the cabin, before planning any racket, bear that in mind."

"Humph! we'll find it all right."

"And, second, we are not likely to find them there," added Jack. "They will be out seeking traces of us."

"Mebbe so. I never thought of that."

Then Lafe relapsed into silence again, and half-an-hour passed before he once more was struck with an idea important enough to rouse him.

"I say!" he suddenly exclaimed, halting to gaze across a valley quite clear of woods. "I believe that yonder hill is the very one at which we were to meet Uncle Joe and Musgrave."

Jack had already observed this feature of the scene.

"So I am inclined to think, Lafe. But if it is we now are on the opposite side of the valley from that we skirted after parting from them."

"Jiminy! that's so," muttered Lafe. "I now see that we are, Jack, in case that really is the same hill."

"I will admit that it looks like the same one."

"Our course must be too far to the west, then."

"Why so?"

"Because we should have come down the opposite side of this valley," Lafe explained, "if our course is to take us as near the west side of the lake as possible."

"I see your point, Lafe, but I am not aiming to hit very near the lake," replied Jack. "I wish only to insure that we get to the west side of it, and far enough south to be below the head of it."

"It strikes me that we might shape a course more direct from here," growled Lafe, who at times liked to have his own way.

But Jack Lightfoot firmly shook his head.

"I shall not change our course, Lafe," said he.

"Gee whiz! ain't I just as likely to be right as you are?"

"Perfectly so, Lafe, but there are several reasons why we should not deviate from our original plan."

"What are they?"

"To begin with," explained Jack; "we are not absolutely sure that this is the same valley and that the same hill. These wooded elevations are much alike, and we may be mistaken."

"Well, that's true enough."

"If we are mistaken and deviate at this point," added Jack, "we throw all of our earlier calculations to the

wind, and we may end only with missing both the lake and camp, and find ourselves in a worse box than that of last night."

"I guess you're right, Jack," laughed Lafe, quickly appreciating the better judgment of his companion. "I am a good deal of a lunkhead, after all."

"Far from that, Lafe, yet there is nothing to gain by taking chances," smiled Jack. "I say, hold to the course we laid out."

"So do I now, old man. Let's wiggle on again."

Jack laughed, and again they set forth with swinging strides.

The sun now was well up in the heavens, and the morning considerably advanced.

As nearly as Jack could estimate it, they had covered about half of the fifteen miles.

At the end of another, Lafe broke open his package of venison and selected a generous chunk, which he devoured while they were walking.

"This walking gives me an awful appetite," he remarked, with a grin. "I wonder how a slice of bread and butter would taste."

"Good," said Jack tersely.

"Um, rather!"

"I trust we shall have a few slices for supper," laughed Jack.

"What time do you make it?" inquired Lafe.

Jack glanced up at the sun, neither having a watch with them.

"Eleven o'clock," said he promptly. "I'll wager that that's within a quarter-hour of the correct time."

"In another hour, then, we should be pretty near the point from which we are to strike east."

"An hour and a half," replied Jack. "It must have been after eight o'clock when we started, and we must make a little allowance for brief halts and the worst of the hills. We must use up four hours, at least, if we are to verify our calculations."

"I guess that's right, Jack," nodded Lafe.

Precisely at the end of another hour, however, Lafe suddenly halted again and exclaimed abruptly:

"Stop a bit!"

Jack paused and looked at him in surprise.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I thought I heard something—yes, there it is again," muttered Lafe, listening with all his ears.

Jack Lightfoot now heard the sound also.

"What do you make of it, Lafe?" he asked.

"I couldn't tell—there it is again!"

"Yes, I heard it quite plainly."

"It sounds to me as if somebody was chopping wood."

"A little like it."

"It's off in that direction," said Lafe, pointing through a thick growth of woods to the southeast.

"So it appears," nodded Jack.

"Let's investigate it," said Lafe bluntly. "If anybody is chopping wood or cutting down a tree out yonder, we possibly could get some information as to the location of our camp."

Jack thought this advice was worth following, and he readily assented.

"We had better move cautiously, however," said he. "If there are any strangers up here in these wilds, it may be well for us to see them before they see us. Then, in case we wish to avoid them, we can do so."

"There is something in that," nodded Lafe.

"We will steal quietly through these woods and try to get a look at them."

The wind, which had shifted into the south after the storm, now was blowing quite fresh, and the sound of it through the lofty pines and smaller firs was sufficient to drown the cautious steps of the boys over the crust of snow.

For upward of a hundred yards they crept forward beneath the trees, and through the scrub, which here grew quite profusely, parting the lower branches as they moved and avoiding making the slightest noise.

The mysterious sound had been frequently repeated, louder and louder as they drew nearer to it, and presently there plainly reached their ears the noise of heavy feet crunching in the snow, and the sound of fierce and labored breathing.

Jack glanced at Lafe, then laid his hand on the latter's arm.

"That's no wood-chopper," said he, in an almost breathless whisper. "There's a big fight going on out there. It sounds to me like two moose."

Lafe's eyes took on a gleam of excitement, a glow like that of fever.

"Gee whiz!" he murmured. "Can we get a shot at them?"

"We will try," nodded Jack. "We are down the wind from them, and they may be too infuriated, if moose, to scent us."

"Sure."

"Have your rifle ready."

"You bet!"

"Don't fire, however, till we see what is going on."

Lafe shook his head, and Jack softly added:

"Not a sound! We must get through this mess of brush unheard."

It was the scrub and bushes that frequently are found growing thickly near the break of a woodland.

Inch by inch, on their hands and knees, the boys crept forward until, when able to part the outer growth on the edge of the low hill which they had traversed, they could view the scene spread out just below them.

Two features of it sent a wild thrill through the heart of each.

That broad open space; the clump of woodland in the middle of it; the surrounding forest, the indentations in the wooded hills and sloping land—there could be no mistaking them.

And both Jack Lightfoot and Lafe instantly saw that they were at the upper edge of the great barren, only a mile west of the lake and camp—the great barren on which they had killed the caribou several days before, and on which Tom Lightfoot had nearly lost his life in the treacherous bog.

Despite their immediate recognition of this scene, despite the thrill of relief occasioned by this evidence that Jack's calculations had proved wondrously accurate, and that the lost camp now was as good as found, these feelings were as nothing to those aroused by another feature of the scene, the like of which many of the oldest of moose hunters have never yet witnessed.

The sounds at first thought to have been the blows of a woodman's ax, were, instead, the furious crash of meeting horns.

On the level, snow-covered barren, nearly on the upper edge of it and within thirty yards of where Jack and Lafe were concealed, two huge moose were engaged in a fierce, death-dealing combat.

A more terrific combat could not be imagined than that put up by these monarchs of the forest.

It is a well-known fact that two of these animals, gigantic alike in frame and fury, will fight until both expire under the terrific strain or of the wounds inflicted; and not unfrequently their massive antlers become so securely interlocked that, despite the utmost efforts of the animals, they cannot be separated, and both die in this strange, inextricable embrace.

Both Jack and Lafe held their breath for a moment, so startling was the picture.

It was plainly evident that they were in no danger of being scented by either animal, for both were so enraged, so bent upon the other's destruction, that nothing of an ordinary nature could divert their attention.

Jack glanced at Lafe's white face, a picture of wild-

est internal excitement, and saw that he was cautiously drawing up his trailed rifle.

"Wait, Lafe!" he softly whispered. "Don't fire yet. Watch them for a few moments."

"But they may scent us and make off," breathed Lafe, with lips quivering.

"No, they will not."

"Gee! we mustn't lose them."

"There is no immediate danger of that," insisted Jack, under his breath. "Get your rifle ready—but wait!"

CHAPTER VI.

IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

There was, indeed, no danger of detection by either of the infuriated moose, no danger of losing a perfect shot at them.

Scarce thirty feet away they were fighting like crazy creatures, head to head, and meeting one another's terrific onset with a violence like locomotives in a head-on collision.

Yet their movements were not rapid, like those of more supple and agile animals, but were indescribably ponderous and awful in their majestic fury.

Now both were upon their hoofs, crunching noisily through the snow-crust at times, the edges of which cut their legs until the blood flowed from the lacerated flesh; and at times both would fall under a terrific mutual attack, crashing down with a horrible thud only to rise again and renew the deadly combat.

Their eyes were blazing like balls of living fire.

Huge volumes of steam poured from the nostrils of each.

Their labored breathing, together with the furious snorts that frequently broke from them, were mingled with the terrible crash and clash of their massive antlers.

"Howling mackerels! I never saw such a fight," said Lafe, in a shivering whisper.

"Nor I, Lafe."

"Which would you bet on?"

"Neither," muttered Jack, more coolly. "They will kill one another if not disturbed."

"Gee whiz! look at that."

The two battling moose had drawn apart, then came together like a whirlwind.

Crash!

Clash!

They had met in the terrific rush with a violence that sent each to his haunches.

"They may smash those splendid antlers," Jack quietly muttered, with a frown.

"I should say so."

"I want the head of one of them to carry home, Lafe, and have it mounted."

"And I'd like the other," Lafe eagerly whispered.

"We had better drop them before any serious damage is done."

"Let's plug 'em at once."

"Wait a minute," cautioned Jack. "We must fire together, Lafe, or the one not shot will make off like the wind."

"You say when," nodded Lafe understandingly.

"Get ready."

With exquisite caution each boy now thrust his rifle barrel through the mask of brush, until he could get a perfect aim at the battling animals.

"You take the one on the left, Lafe," whispered Jack. "Send your bullet just back of his fore shoulder."

"Let me alone for that."

"Are you ready?"

"All ready, Jack."

"And perfectly steady?"

"Steady as a clock. Say when."

Jack Lightfoot waited until both of the plunging animals were side on, thus presenting a perfect mark.

Then he cried softly:

"Fire!"

Bang!

Both weapons rang out at the same second.

The moose at which Lafe had fired plunged forward to his knees, burying his antlers into the crust of snow, which was drenched crimson from the life-blood that leaped in a gush from his side even before he fell.

Lafe Lampton had sent a bullet straight through the monster's heart.

Jack Lightfoot was not so lucky, however, although his aim was just as accurate and his fire equally prompt.

Unfortunately for Jack, just as he was pressing the trigger of his weapon, the front hoofs of the moose at which he was aiming broke through the snow-crust and let the animal drop several inches as quick as a flash.

As a result the bullet from Jack's rifle, instead of inflicting a mortal wound, only plowed an ugly furrow through the shoulder and back of the moose, not only redoubling his fury, but also starting him off in wild flight the instant he beheld the death fall of his late antagonist.

Instinct sent him, not to one side nor off across the

barren, but in a direct line to the shelter of the nearest woods.

This happened to be the point at which Jack and Lafe were crouching in concealment.

Before either had time to expel the empty shell from his rifle and fire again, both weapons having been discharged at the same moment, the mad moose was plunging with the speed of an Empire Express locomotive up the low incline in front of them, utterly blind to their presence in the brush directly in his path.

For the boys it was the closest of close quarters.

To have waited to aim and fire, or to hazard a shot without aiming, would have been sure death for one or both of them under the hoofs and antlers of the enraged beast.

A shriek broke from Lafe, and a roar from Jack.

Lafe said nothing, however, but Jack's roar was a command.

"Scatter! It's for our lives!"

Jack could not wait to see what Lafe did, but leaped up even while he spoke and darted to one side, tearing like a madman through the brush.

Luckily Lafe kept his head, despite his appalling fright, and he scrambled up and fled in the opposite direction.

The space they had occupied was vacant hardly an instant, for the moose came tearing through it with the rush of a cyclone, his spreading horns rending brush and branches asunder, and cutting through the bushes a swathe as clean as a farmer's scythe through a grass plot.

At that moment he caught sight of both boys, still fleeing for dear life, and, instead of maintaining his own mad flight, his wrath was turned upon them as if he saw in them the cause of all his troubles.

For an instant only he hesitated, unable to pursue both of them, and then he vented a terrific snort and plunged after Jack Lightfoot, now some twenty feet away.

Lafe heard him turn, and he came about with a yell of mortal frenzy.

"Look out, Jack!" he shrieked. "He's after you!"

Jack Lightfoot needed no one to tell him so.

One hurried glance over his shoulder was enough.

He beheld the blazing eyes, the lolling tongue, the steaming nostrils, the mighty antlers, and the giant figure—all ripping through the brush toward him at the rate of a mile a minute, or so at least it seemed.

Yet Jack Lightfoot did not lose his head.

One forward glance told him that escape through the brush would be utterly impossible.

He must be ground to pulp within thirty seconds.

Ten feet away a little to one side, however, he saw a single huge pine-tree.

He glanced up in search of a branch to which he might swing himself out of the moose's reach.

For thirty feet the straight trunk was as trim and bare as a ship's mast.

To climb it was out of the question, and Jack, fully realizing that his life depended upon his coolness and agility, took the only other course the appalling situation presented.

He sped like an arrow to one side, and then leaped behind the tree.

He knew that the moose could not come through it.

Yet fairly blind in his fury the monstrous beast, then barely six feet behind Jack, crashed against the tree trunk with his head and antlers, with a blow that shook the mighty tree from its roots to its topmost branches. Then without an instant's pause he plunged around the tree after the fleeing object of his anger.

Fleet-footed Jack had darted away off, utterly unable to use his rifle to any advantage, and was making for two smaller pines some twenty feet away.

Lafe Lampton, meantime, was yelling at the top of his lungs and tearing like a maniac through the brush, vainly trying to reach a position from which he could kill the moose without the danger of shooting Jack, the rapid movements of the two having made it impossible for a time.

The moose circled around the big pine-tree like a cyclone, and again made after Jack.

Jack was heading for the two pine-trees mentioned, which grew straight up from the ground and were about three feet apart.

As he ran he was measuring every possibility presented, and he was hit with a bright idea, one of those bright inspirations which come to fearless minds in a moment of extraordinary peril.

The execution of it required the taking of a desperate chance—but Jack Lightfoot took it.

Like a flash, he darted directly between the two pines.

As he hoped, and in a measure had expected, the moose tried to follow him.

Jack felt the hot breath of the beast close upon him, and heard the massive antlers crash against the two trees as the moose turned them slightly in his effort to plunge through the space between the pines, which Jack had foreseen was too narrow to allow of his passing.

Then, as Jack further had hoped, the antlers were

caught for a moment between the trees, and the snorting moose tugged violently back in a mad effort to release them.

In that one moment the animal's doom was sealed, however.

With a lightning-like bound Jack leaped back around one of the trees, clapped the muzzle of his Winchester nearly against the side of the tugging moose just back of his fore shoulder and began to fire.

Bang!

Bang! bang! bang!

Three shots followed in quick succession, and each brought a gush of hot blood.

The moose fell to the ground as if struck with a bolt of lightning.

"Dead!" shouted Jack, as Lafe came rushing up. "Dead as a smelt!"

For half-a-minute Lafe could not speak.

He sat down on a stump, white and panting, and with eyes sticking out as if loath to return to their natural places in his head.

"What's the matter?" cried Jack, as he whirled about with his smoking weapon and looked at him.

Lafe uttered one tremendous gasp.

"Gee whiz! Howling mackerels!" he cried, in a way as if nothing verbal could express his feelings. "I thought I'd never see you standing on two feet again after that scrimmage ended."

Jack indulged in a ringing laugh, a rather nervous laugh under the violent reaction that now followed his excitement, to tell the whole truth.

"Well, I'm here, Lafe, and on both feet," he replied. "I'll admit, however, that I now feel a little shaky."

"Shaky!" echoed Lafe. "Jiminy beeswax, I don't wonder! I never saw anything like it. I tried to get where I could shoot the critter without hitting you, but I'm jiggered if you didn't drop him before I could do it."

"Never mind, Lafe, as long as he is down and out," laughed Jack. "It was a close call, however, there's no getting around that."

"Close isn't any name for it, Jack," declared Lafe, now rising again. "You've got a wonderfully cool head on your shoulders. Only one person in a hundred could have done what you did. Put it there, Jack! I'm darned if I ain't proud of you."

There was something so very genuine in this that Jack, instead of laughing, lightly accepted the hand that Lafe impulsively extended and wrung it warmly.

"Much obliged, Lafe," said he heartily. "The feeling is mutual, old man, I assure you."

"Well, mebbe so, but I don't think I'm much to be proud of," replied Lafe, with a jolly laugh. "By gracious, Jack, I can't help thinking of the lot of clever work you have done to-day. I don't know what you couldn't accomplish if you were only driven to it, as this getting snowed-up has driven you."

"Clever work, Lafe," echoed Jack. "What do you mean?"

"Jiminy crickets! don't you know where we are at?" cried Lafe gleefully. "Don't you recognize that scene out yonder?"

"Oh, yes, the great barren!" exclaimed Jack. "I now see what you mean, Lafe."

"We have hit within a mile of the lake camp."

"That's right, old man."

"And all through your clever calculations, Jack," declared Lafe. "Gee whiz, I'll never go contrary to your judgment again as long as I travel with you."

Jack Lightfoot laughed and now turned to have a look at the dead moose, which both boys proceeded to examine.

"He's a splendid specimen," said Jack. "What a magnificent head and antlers! Those go home to Cranford with me, Lafe, if I have to carry them in my arms all the way."

"And the head of that other goes with me, Jack," said Lafe. "Jiminy crickets! won't the eyes of the Cranford people stick out when they see 'em and hear our story?"

"They'll probably say it's a fish-story," laughed Jack.

"Let 'em!" growled Lafe. "We know the truth, and that's good enough for us."

"Right you are, Lafe."

"He's a beauty, and no mistake."

"Now the best thing for us to do, since we must leave them and head for the camp, is to cover both carcasses with some branches till we can bring Uncle Joe and Musgrave to assist in moving them to the cabin."

"That's right, too."

"There may be wolves about, and, while the moose might not be discovered until night, we'd better be on the safe side," added Jack. "We'll cover them with enough heavy branches to protect them, and try to get them to the camp before dark."

"That's the stuff, Jack."

Both boys now set about it, and in half-an-hour they had both carcasses sufficiently covered for temporary protection. That done, they shouldered their rifles and started across the barren.

"The rest of the way is a cinch, Lafe," remarked Jack, as they clambered up the eastern hills, and struck a familiar path. "We no longer are lost, no longer snowed-up. Thank Heaven, we soon shall be able to relieve Uncle Joe and Tom of their anxiety."

"Jiminy crickets! won't they be glad to see us?" chuckled Lafe.

"That doesn't half express it," said Jack. "So cut loose and we'll make for the camp with a Garrison finish."

And, despite the fifteen miles already covered since morning, both boys broke into a run and scampered over the level snow-crust as if another moose was after them.

CHAPTER VII.

A JOYOUS REUNION.

It was close upon two o'clock when Jack and Lafe arrived at the camp, and at first they saw no one about.

"It's just as I told you, Lafe," said Jack. "All hands are out searching for traces of us."

"Well, I hope they've left this cabin door unlocked," said Lafe. "Then I'll begin searching—for bread and butter."

"We'll get in all right, Lafe, if we have to resort to the window."

There was no occasion for the latter, however, because the cabin door was easily opened, and both boys entered.

As they trooped noisily in, up sprang Tom Lightfoot from one of the bunks, wildly rubbing his eyes and staring like one suddenly awakened from a dream.

He looked pale and haggard, and not until Jack spoke, which he did quickly, could Tom appear to realize that he gazed at boys of flesh and blood, and not at two ghosts.

"Well, Tom, here we are again," cried Jack heartily.

Then what a yell came from Tom Lightfoot, and what a demonstration of mingled joy and relief.

Half-crying, half-laughing, he tore like a madman around the cabin, now grabbing Jack with a wild hug, now seizing Lafe with a mad embrace, now dancing and yelling like a maniac right out of Bloomingdale, until both Jack and Lafe seized him bodily and whacked him down into a chair, where they held him by main strength for all of half-a-minute.

"Have you gone off your perch?" spluttered Lafe, glaring down at him. "Got a knothole in your roof, or what? Do you always have this kind of a tantrum when two game sportsmen come into camp?"

"Holy smoke!" cried Tom, half choked while he wrung their hands. "Talk about being glad! Why, Jack, I thought you were ghosts—on my word, I did!"

"What were you—asleep?" demanded Jack, who saw that Tom was very nearly in tears, so great was his relief and joy.

"Ghosts, eh?" grunted Lafe, with a scornful shrug. "Well, you'll find us mighty substantial ghosts, and mighty empty ones as well. Get a move on, Tom! Got any bread and butter here?"

Lafe, too, saw Tom's emotion, and much of this last was with a view to staving it off.

It had the desired effect, moreover, for Tom suddenly burst out laughing and cried:

"Hungry, eh? That does settle it! It's Lafe in the flesh, and not his ghost. By gracious, this is the happiest moment of my life. Sit down, both of you, and I'll have grub enough out in half-a-minute to feed an army. Sit down and tell me how in thunder you weathered that storm and found your way here."

"You be jiggered," growled Lafe humorously. "Do you s'pose we're going to make you wise to all we know about woodcraft? Not by a long chalk! You go out and get your eye-teeth cut."

Tom laughed, all the while hustling the table full of food.

The latter quickly put a stopper on Lafe's tongue, moreover, and Jack considerably remarked:

"We'll tell you all about our experiences a little later, Tom. First of all, where are Uncle Joe and Musgrave?"

"Out looking for you—or your bodies."

"They fear we are dead, eh?"

"I should say so, Jack, after the storm of last night," said Tom. "I'm blessed if I can see how you weathered it. They wouldn't let me go with them to-day, as they wanted to travel far and fast. I was awake with anxiety all of last night, and only an hour ago, when utterly worn out, I finally dropped asleep. Even now I can hardly believe that I'm not dreaming."

"You're awake, all right, Tom, and we're here safe and sound," laughed Jack, now dipping into the food. "While we're eating tell us what happened after we failed to join you as agreed. Did Musgrave start up a couple of moose?"

"Yes, sure, and we fired three shots at them," said Tom, now quite himself again. "They were out of range, however, and——"

"Bosh!" interrupted Lafe, through a mouthful of food. "Come out to-morrow, and we'll show you how to shoot."

"Dry up, Lafe," commanded Jack bluntly. "I wish to hear Tom's story. What next occurred, Tom?"

"Musgrave said it would be useless to pursue the two moose, so we hastened to the hill at which you and Lafe were to rejoin us."

"We went astray in some way."

"So we inferred," nodded Tom. "That, of course, made us very anxious."

"Naturally."

"Musgrave said at once that we could find you only in one way, by going back to the place where we parted and there take up your trail."

"Certainly."

"So we took the back track, Jack, and finally hit your trail," continued Tom. "You must have gone awfully astray, for we followed your tracks for nearly three miles out of the right course, and then we came upon the moose which you killed."

"Humph! you'd have come upon another, Tom, if you had kept on trailing us," grunted Lafe.

"Did Uncle Joe think that we killed it?" asked Jack.

"Oh, yes, we had no doubt of that, for the snow-shoe tracks made that obvious."

"I see."

"Not finding you, however, we were a little mystified at first," Tom went on. "Then Musgrave followed your trail to where the second moose was wounded——"

"I did that," put in Lafe, with a grin.

"And then, knowing that you two must have started to trail the wounded moose, we realized the danger you were in," said Tom. "It was growing dark and beginning to snow rapidly, which quickly covered the trail, though Musgrave followed it for half-a-mile or more."

"And then he lost it, eh?"

"It was entirely obliterated," nodded Tom. "We had no way of telling how far you had gone or in what direction, and we had to leave you to shift for yourselves."

"Humph! that was dead easy," muttered Lafe.

"We then took the back track and started for the camp," continued Tom. "Then, heavens, how it came on to snow and blow! I thought we all should go under. It was nearly midnight when we reached the cabin, and we were compelled to give you two up for lost."

"Oh, you can't lose us," laughed Lafe. "We're not the losing kind. We are winners from the scratch, Tom. You ought to have known that."

"So I should, Lafe, under ordinary circumstances," protested Tom, with a significant shake of his head.

"I should hope so."

"But this was no common case, boys. It was more than a hunt through Hickman's Swamp, or a dash over Cranford hills. It was a matter of life or death, Lafe, so who could help feeling anxious."

"None of you, surely," admitted Jack. "I told Lafe that you would all be greatly worried about us."

"Bosh! there wasn't any occasion for worry about us," growled Lafe, who could not resist displaying a little egotism now that he was well out of the scrape. "You always may let Jack and me alone to look out for ourselves. It's a mighty cold day when we two get left."

"I begin to think that's true," laughed Tom.

"Surely it's true, old man."

"But you haven't told me what befell you, Jack, nor how you managed to pull out of the trouble," added Tom. "Come, I'm impatient to hear your side of the story."

"All right, Tom," cried Jack, now pushing back from the table after a hearty meal. "The story may be told in a nutshell."

"I'm all ears, Jack."

"And I feel as if I was all teeth and stomach," declared Lafe, who still was getting outside of an amazing quantity of food. "I don't believe I ever will get filled up this time."

Jack Lightfoot ignored his interruption, however, and both boys now proceeded to tell Tom about their experiences of the previous night.

Tom's eyes opened pretty wide while he listened to their account of trailing the wounded moose, of their finding the crevice which they had converted into a shelter from the storm, and of their discovery and killing of the black bear.

"Get out!" Tom doubtfully exclaimed, at the latter point. "You fellows did not kill the bear, did you? You don't expect me to swallow that."

"Not the bear," laughed Jack.

"But here are his hind claws," cried Lafe. "You may swallow that much of him, if you like."

And, while speaking, he tossed upon the table both hairy paws of the bear, which he had cut off at the first joint.

Tom now was forced to believe the story, and he examined the trophies with increasing interest.

"By gracious!" he declared, with a head-shake. "You fellows must have had a mighty wicked scrimmage; take it from first to last."

"Oh, it wasn't half bad," grunted Lafe, with a quizzical grin. "We knew, however, that you'd suspect us

of telling a fish-story, so we decided to bring home a few ocular evidences in support of our statements."

"So I see," laughed Tom good-naturedly. "I can put up with any amount of your banter, Lafe, I am so rejoiced over your safe return."

"Humph! you ought to have expected no less."

"Go on, Jack."

Jack Lightfoot then continued, telling Tom in what way they had provided against the storm, also about their encounter with the wolves, as well as of the calculations by which they had aimed to reach the camp; and then of their arrival at the great barren, of the fight between the two moose, and of the stirring adventure that had followed.

Tom Lightfoot was prepared to swallow almost anything by the time that Jack had finished; and the latter no sooner had done so than he glanced sharply at the cabin clock and abruptly added:

"It's only three o'clock, Lafe. What time was it, Tom, when Uncle Joe and Musgrave set out in search of us?"

"Time!" echoed Tom expressively. "They have been gone since daybreak, Jack."

"Did they say at what time they would return?"

"No, indeed," declared Tom. "Uncle Joe said they would not quit searching till they found you, and that I must not look for them at any specified time."

"Humph! they may not return before to-morrow, in that case."

"Well, suppose they don't," growled Lafe, not yet seeing what Jack had in mind. "I reckon we can go it alone here in the cabin, all right, Jack, since we could weather last night's racket in a split in the side of a hill."

"I'm not thinking of that, Lafe."

"What have you got on your mind, then?"

"Those two moose, Lafe," explained Jack. "I don't fancy letting them remain overnight where we left them. I hoped to have brought them into the camp before dark. If wolves should get at them, there would be only the bones left in the morning."

"Gee, that's right, too," admitted Lafe.

"We want those heads to take to Cranford," added Jack, with a glance at Tom. "They will look great when mounted. Yet if we leave the moose till morning and the wolves get at them——"

"Oh, I say!" interrupted Lafe. "What's the matter with going after them, Jack?"

"Nonsense!" cried Tom. "We shall need the help of Uncle Joe and Musgrave, if we're to bring the animals into camp."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Jack.

"You don't think we can lug in two big moose, do you?" demanded Tom derisively.

"Not lug them in, Tom," replied Jack, rising. "But you forget the sledge out in the back shed. We might drag them here on that."

Despite that they already had tramped upward of twenty miles that day, the fear of losing the moose heads, together with the feasibility of the project Jack had suggested, acted as spurs to further labors.

"Gee, that's the very thing!" cried Lafe, jumping up with much enthusiasm. "Of course we can drag them here. The sledge will make it dead easy."

"Not quite that, Lafe, yet I think we can accomplish it by bringing one at a time, and land both of them here before dark."

"Sure we can."

"The snow-crust is strong enough to support the sledge, and that will make the going comparatively easy," said Jack confidently. "By hitching a rope to each side of the sledge, all three of us can have a hand in dragging it, and possibly we can do the whole job with only one trip."

"Let's get a move on," cried Lafe impatiently. "I'm good for half-a-dozen trips, if necessary."

"What do you say, Tom?"

"I'm game for it, Jack," was the prompt rejoinder. "It'll serve to wake me up and take the kinks out of me."

"Come on, then," said Jack, hurriedly resuming his outer garments. "We'll have the whole job done before dark."

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER.

The sledge mentioned by Jack Lightfoot was one made and usually kept at the cabin by Mr. Denton, for just such uses as that to which the boys were now about to put it. It was low and broad, making it easily laden, while a pair of smooth, wide runners insured it against cutting deeply into the frozen snow.

Jack led the way out to a rough, open shed at the back of the camp, in which the sledge and a few other outdoor articles were kept, only to find that the entrance was blocked with snow to the depth of several feet.

"Bring out a couple of shovels, Lafe," he cried. "Everything is snowed-up, but we'll dig out the sledge in no time."

Nearly half-an-hour was required, however, before the sledge could be hauled out and drawn to the frozen

surface of the snow at one side. Yet it was both strong and light, and from that time the work was comparatively easy.

In addition to the double line in front, which was long enough for Jack to pass over his shoulders and under his arms, thus giving greater hauling power, he also attached a stout rope to an iron ring in each side of the sledge, thus enabling all three to do the work when necessary.

"It's only half-past three, and there still are two hours before dark," declared Lafe, when all was prepared for the start.

"We can make two trips in that time, if necessary," said Jack.

"Hadn't we better leave a note for Uncle Joe, in case he and Musgrave return?" asked Tom.

"There's no need of that," cried Lafe impatiently. "They have eyes, and would see what we have been doing. Let Musgrave alone to trail us, if they arrive before dark."

"That's right, too, Lafe," admitted Tom. "It didn't occur to me."

"You're not up in woodcraft," grinned Lafe. "We had better take our rifles, hadn't we, Jack?"

"By all means," nodded the latter. "There's no knowing what may happen."

A half-minute later the boys got under way, dragging the light sledge after them, and headed for the great barren.

The trip was made more quickly than any had expected, however, for at the brow of the first long hill, of which there were several during the journey, Lafe was hit with a good idea.

"Gee! what's the matter with coasting down this hill?" he demanded. "It'll save lots of time, aside from the sport in it."

"There are too many trees, aren't there?" demanded Tom. "We may run into one of them and smash the sledge."

"Bosh! you're too cautious," cried Lafe. "I can guide the sledge all right. Pile aboard here, and we'll try it."

Jack Lightfoot offered no objection, and quickly seated himself with Tom at the forward part of the low sledge.

Lafe took the entire rear, however, using one leg and the toe of his boot with which to guide the craft, and he proved himself as good as his word.

Though he narrowly skinned several of the trees when the speed increased, the light sledge fairly flew over the hard crust before the base of the hill was

reached, and the impetus carried it a hundred yards up the next long incline.

"Jiminy crickets! that beats walking," Lafe gleefully cried, as he sprang up and wiped from his eyes the tears brought there by the wind.

"It does so," laughed Tom.

"I never had a better coast," added Lafe. "I'm almost tempted to go back and try it again."

"That would be hardly worth while," said Jack. "There are other hills to be descended before we reach the barren, so we had better wait for them. Get onto your job, and we'll forge ahead."

As Jack had intimated, several similar coasts were enjoyed during the trip, and only a quarter-hour was consumed in reaching the barren.

Upon gaining the brow of the hill which overlooked the lower sweep of the level land, however, the boys met with an unexpected discovery, not one at all to their liking.

"Gee whiz! there are two men at our moose, Jack," excitedly muttered Lafe, who was the first to emerge from the woods and discover them.

"Get out!"

"Sure there are!"

"They must be Uncle Joe and Musgrave, then, or——"

Jack caught back what he was about to remark, for he now saw that both men were strangers.

They were down on the barren something like a hundred yards away, and they not only had removed from the moose the branches with which Jack and Lafe had covered it, but one of them already was engaged in cutting open the animal, preparatory to making off with the most desirable portions of it.

Both men carried rifles, moreover, and evidently were hunters.

"They look like half-breeds," muttered Jack, after watching them for a moment.

"One of 'em is cutting into that moose of mine," snarled Lafe, under his breath.

"So I see."

"Jiminy crickets! I'll not stand for that. I'm going down there and——"

"Stop a moment," cautioned Jack, who knew that Lafe's impulsive temper might get all hands into trouble that best would be avoided.

"What's that? I'm not going to stand here and let that fellow cut up my——"

"I don't want you to stand here," Jack quietly interrupted. "I only want you to let me do the talking with them, Lafe, after we get down there. You're so hot-headed that you may get us all into a needless fight."

"Bosh! I'm going to have that moose, Jack, or there'll be a fight all right."

"You let me do the talking," insisted Jack.

"What are you doing now?"

Jack had drawn the sledge to the brow of the hill, and now was motioning Tom to get aboard.

"We'll coast down there," said he bluntly. "They have not discovered us yet, and we can land almost on top of them before they see us."

"Have your gun ready, then," growled Lafe, as he complied. "I'll steer this thing, and it's odds I take a leg off of one of those robbers."

"Don't you look for trouble so quickly," protested Jack, as he seated himself on the sledge.

"I'm going to have that moose, trouble or no trouble," snarled Lafe.

As he spoke he pushed the sledge from the brow of the hill and headed her for the two men.

The sledge sped downward as if shot from a gun, and then out over the level crust of the barren.

The distance, a short hundred yards, was covered in a very few seconds, and Lafe shot the sledge in among the branches which the men had tossed to one side of the prostrate moose.

To say that they were startled by the unexpected appearance of the boys, who had arrived as if by fast express, is to put it mildly.

One of them, a lank, bearded fellow of fifty, uttered a yell of surprise; while the man engaged in ripping open the moose leaped up as if electrified, and then made a dive for his rifle.

Jack Lightfoot quickly sprang up from the sledge, however, and coolly demanded:

"Why have you two men touched this moose? Didn't you know it belonged to other hunters?"

As their surprise abated, also when they saw that they had only three boys to deal with, a threatening scowl quickly settled on the faces of both men. They were, as Jack Lightfoot had inferred, two Canadian half-breeds, presumably with a camp some miles away, from which they had journeyed since morning.

"You be hanged!" exclaimed the man with a rifle, while he wiped his gory hand across his thigh. "You tree boy no shoot dis moose."

He spoke in decidedly broken English, with a slight French accent, but Jack had no trouble in understanding him.

"No, three of us did not shoot him, but one of us did," he quickly answered. "And you fellows must let him alone."

"You be hang!" repeated the half-breed, scowling more savagely. "You no have right to shoot him."

"Not have a right to shoot him?" cried Jack derisively. "What do you mean by that?"

"We first find signs of him," the fellow grimly explained, with a threatening head-shake. "We trail him here and only find him dead. We get on tracks first, so you tree boy have no right to kill him."

Jack not only would have ignored so absurd a claim, but he also plainly saw that the half-breed was lying, and he had no idea of being robbed upon any such pretense.

"I don't believe any of that stuff, mister," said he firmly.

"You no believe what I tell you."

"Not a word of it," Jack stoutly declared. "Why doesn't your friend back you up in the story? Why does he remain silent?"

"He no speak English."

"And yours isn't over the average," Lafe now bluntly put in, no longer able to restrain himself. "You can't bluff us into swallowing any such cock-and-bull story as you are telling. I shot that moose, and I'm going to have him. Lay hold here, Tom, and we'll get him aboard the sledge."

While he thus angrily declared himself, Lafe yanked the sledge alongside the prostrate moose, and with Tom's assistance he now began to drag the animal aboard.

The half-breed swung round and began to jabber excitedly to his companion in provincial French, which he probably thought the boys could not understand.

All three of them knew enough of French, however, to get the drift of what the man was saying, which consisted only of a suggestion to intimidate the boys and take the moose away from them by force.

Before Jack could utter a word of remonstrance, moreover, having waited till their talk should end, both men suddenly sprang forward with angry cries and thrust Lafe and Tom away from the dead moose.

It needed no more than this to rouse Lafe's ire to the limit and send him clean over the traces.

With an ugly scowl, he leaped at the nearest half-breed, the one who had done the talking, and his clenched fist shot straight out from his shoulder.

It caught the man squarely on the jaw, sending him to the snow as if struck with a mallet.

Jack Lightfoot saw that they were in for trouble, and he had his eye upon both men.

As one of them fell under Lafe's cracking blow, the other clapped his gun to his shoulder as if to shoot the former.

With a single bound, however, Jack leaped at him like a staghound at a deer, beating up the weapon just as the scoundrel pressed the trigger, and sending the bullet wide of the mark intended.

"Drop that gun!" Jack fiercely shouted, seizing the rascal by the throat and tripping him backward, the rifle being dropped in their brief scuffle. "If you make another move to harm us, either one of you, I'll not answer for your lives."

Jack also had dropped his rifle, but he now whipped out his revolver while speaking, and, before either of the miscreants could rise, he stood ready to shoot.

In falling, Lafe's first assailant had also lost his gun, and he now sat dazed and staring upon the snow, more surprised than anything else by the unexpected violence with which their assault had been met.

"Good for you, Jack!" yelled Lafe, snatching up his weapon. "We can do these mongrels!"

"Careful, Lafe."

"Grab their guns, Tom!" roared Lafe excitedly. "Once we have them disarmed, they can do nothing. We'll teach you duffers to put up a bluff against us."

Tom had seen the wisdom of Lafe's suggestion, and, with a dive in each direction, he quickly had both guns, before either of the half-breeds could make a move to recover them.

"Now we have 'em," cried Lafe, flushed red with anger. "Stand up, you fellows, the both of you, or I'll blow your rascally heads off. Get up, I say, or I'll——"

"You keep quiet, Lafe, and be careful with that rifle," Jack Lightfoot now interrupted. "We want no bloodshed here, if it can be avoided."

He spoke quite sternly now, for he was not sure to what extreme Lafe's anger might carry him.

"Careful be jiggered," snarled Lafe resentfully. "Was that cur careful when he attempted to shoot me?"

And he fiercely brandished his rifle at the half-breed mentioned, both of whom had now risen to their feet, only to stand scowling and helpless some yards away.

"Two wrongs do not make a right," Jack firmly answered. "If these men think we do not mean business——"

"Darn 'em! they'll find we mean business!"

"That all right," the half-breed now ventured to cry. "You tree boy take moose——"

"You can bet your boots we'll take him!"

"Only give us the guns and we no trouble you any more."

"Not by a long chalk!" cried Lafe.

Jack also shook his head.

"You can't have your weapons at present," he declared, addressing the two men. "How are we to know that you'll not attack us again, and possibly kill one of us, as your companion just attempted to do?"

"No, no, he no mean to do that," protested the half-breed, with an earnestness that now appeared genuine. "He no understand. We trouble you no more if you tree boy take moose and give back our guns."

Jack hesitated for a moment, the fellow now appeared so humble, and Tom hastened to cry:

"I'll tell what we might do, Jack."

"What's that?"

"Unload the weapons and make the rascals give up all of their ammunition," said Tom. "They then can do us no harm."

"That's not so bad," said Jack. "Yet I don't quite fancy——"

Before he could conclude, however, there came an interruption which completely settled the matter and made further precautions needless.

A ringing shout fell upon the ears of all, the cry of a stentorian voice familiar to each of the boys, and they turned and beheld two men emerging from the nearest woods and hurrying down to the barren.

They were Uncle Joe Denton and the Indian guide, Musgrave.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

The Cranford boys needed no further assurance that the episode with the half-breeds was as good as ended.

Though all three returned the welcome shout, before either could find words with which to greet him, Mr. Denton came plunging into their midst, to seize both Jack and Lafe by the hand which he shook as if bent upon wrenching their arms from the sockets.

"You good-for-nothing rascals!" he cried, with a mingling of emotion and admiration that gave his epithet the lie. "So you're here alive and well, are you? I've found you, have I? By all that's wonderful, I could hardly hope for such good fortune. You two boys have given me the greatest fright of my life."

"Are you trying to get even with us by crushing my fingers?" cried Lafe, with a laugh and grimace. "Gee, but you've got an awful grip!"

"That's because I'm so overjoyed to see you both," declared Mr. Denton, with much feeling. "I've been so anxious—but we'll talk of that later. Who are these fellows, Jack? Not friends, I should say, if one were to judge by their looks."

He had broken off so abruptly, turning frowningly upon the half-breeds standing near-by, that Jack saw that he wished first of all to be rid of the two men, before indulging in further words of greeting and explanation.

"No, not friends, Uncle Joe," replied Jack. "What has occurred here may be told in a nutshell."

Mr. Denton frowned darkly while he listened to Jack's disclosures, which no sooner were concluded than he turned to the guide and demanded:

"Do you know either of these scamps, Musgrave?"

The Indian glared darkly at them for a moment and shook his head.

"No ever see 'em, Joe," he replied grimly. "But me know them next time."

"Yes, so shall I," cried Denton pointedly.

Then he strode up to the two men and shook his fist under the nose of each, crying harshly:

"By rights, you dogs, I ought to thrash you both within an inch of your lives. But you are not worth the trouble. Give them their guns, Tom."

Tom Lightfoot hastened to obey.

"Now get, you rascals," cried Mr. Denton. "If you're not under cover of the woods before I count ten, I'll send an ounce of lead after you."

The two men needed no second bidding.

Before five could have been counted, both of the rascals were legging it for dear life toward the nearest woods, into the depths of which they quickly vanished, glad enough to have escaped so easily.

Congratulations were then resumed, and, while preparations were being made for removing both moose to the camp, this being easily done with the help of the two men, Jack briefly informed Mr. Denton what had transpired since their parting the previous day.

"But what puzzles me, Uncle Joe, is how you

chanced to find us here, for you certainly arrived at a bully good moment," said Jack, in conclusion.

"It was less due to chance than to Musgrave," laughed Mr. Denton, in whom most of Jack's disclosures had appeared to occasion no great surprise.

"How was that, sir?"

"We have been on your trail for several hours, Jack."

"On our trail, Uncle Joe?"

"Exactly," said Mr. Denton, proceeding to explain. "When Musgrave and I set out in search of you this morning, we first struck for the place where you began to trail the moose which you wounded yesterday afternoon."

"Just before the storm came on," nodded Jack.

"Both the storm and the darkness, Jack," said his uncle. "By daylight, however, Musgrave's woodcraft enabled him to track the moose where you killed him. A broken twig here and there, or a tree trunk marked by the animal's antlers as he tore through the woods, were all that Musgrave required. Just before noon we discovered all that the wolves had left of the moose, and soon after we found the shelter in which you and Lafe had passed the night."

"Ah! I see," exclaimed Jack. "You were not surprised, then, at finding us alive and kicking."

Uncle Joe laughed and shook his head.

"Not at all," he rejoined. "After locating your shelter, Jack, we knew that you had weathered the storm all right. There were plenty of signs indicating what you had done, and how you had passed the night."

"It was a pretty good shelter, wasn't it?" asked Lafe, who was busy helping Musgrave prepare the moose for transportation.

"Capital!" said Mr. Denton heartily. "It was worthy the skill of old and experienced hunters."

"It filled the bill all right," chuckled Lafe, with a wink at the Indian guide, who was nearly as pleased as Mr. Denton by the exploits of the boys.

"But how did you find us here, Uncle Joe?" inquired Jack. "Have you been to the cabin since we left it?"

"No, not since morning," replied his uncle. "We saw on the ground the plan which one of you had drawn, indicating the probable location of your shelter. That told us that you had started out in search of the camp, and we easily found the trail you had left behind you."

"Ah! I see," cried Jack. "Then you tracked us here."

"Exactly," nodded Uncle Joe. "We were not sure that you would succeed in finding the camp, so we hastened in pursuit of you. We had just discovered the dead moose in the woods yonder when we heard your voices down here on the barren. So we hastened down here, arriving at a very good time, as you remarked."

"That makes it plain enough," cried Jack; and then he hastened to add, with some feeling: "I'm awfully sorry, Uncle Joe, that we have occasioned so much trouble and anxiety, but——"

"Nonsense!" Mr. Denton warmly interrupted. "Such experiences occur to the oldest hunters, and you are in no way to blame. Even if you were, Jack, I'm so glad to find you both alive that I should not utter a word of censure."

There were, indeed, good grounds for mutual satisfaction, and explanations now having been made, all hands set to work to remove both moose to the camp.

Darkness had fallen before the last step of that long day of labor had been taken, yet none was so weary that that hunter's camp away up in the heart of the Canadian wilderness was not a scene of hearty rejoicing till late that night.

Though the incidents and adventures they had thus far experienced did not end this outing of Jack Lightfoot and his companions, those that followed were of a less dangerous and exciting character, and may be only mentioned in concluding.

Tom Lightfoot was much averse to returning to Cranford without the same kind of a trophy that Jack and Lafe had secured, and five more days were spent in the camp before Tom finally succeeded in obtaining what he desired.

One morning Musgrave discovered signs near an open edge of the lake, where water was still available, which made it evident that one or more moose were visiting the place at night.

Uncle Joe then proposed jacking for them, or hunting them at night, by means of a strong lantern kept at the camp for that purpose.

The proposal was hailed with delight, it giving the boys a chance to try that other style of hunting, and the expedition proved as successful as could be desired.

For Tom Lightfoot succeeded in dropping a moose as large as Jack had slain, and the much desired trophy was secured.

Two days later preparations were made for breaking camp and returning to Henley's cabin, sixteen miles below, where Mr. Denton had left his horses and team.

Before leaving the camp Musgrave prepared the three splendid moose heads for transportation, and these were laden upon the sledge for removal to Henley's, along with as much of the venison as could be carried.

The trip was easily made, and, without further adventures, and on the following day the boys arrived safely at Mr. Denton's home, thirty miles below.

Here one day of rest was enjoyed, and on the following the farewell words were spoken, regretful ones they were, after which the three boys started for their homes in Cranford.

Having enjoyed an outing in Florida, and the succeeding hunting-trip to the wonderful snow forests of Canada, Jack and his chums now come face to face with a new feature in their career, and in the next story it will be seen how they laid plans in preparation for the crowning event of their lives, an entrance to fair Harvard.

THE END

HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 31, "How to Make a Cheap Skiff." No. 32, "Archery." No. 33, "Cross-Country Running." No. 34, "The Game of Lacrosse." No. 35, "The Boy With a Hobby for Collecting." No. 36, "Football, and How to Play It." No. 37, "A Practice Game." No. 38, "How to Play Football—Training." No. 39, "The Men in the Line." No. 40, "The Men Behind." No. 41, "Signal Systems." No. 42, "Team Play." No. 43, "The End of the Season." No. 44, "A Gymnasium Without Apparatus." (I.) No. 45, "A Gymnasium Without Apparatus." (II.) No. 46, "Bag-Punching." No. 47, "Camping." No. 48, "Cruising in Small Boats." No. 49, "Snow-Shoe and Skee Work."

HOW TO MAKE AND USE A TOBOGGAN.

"Zip! Walkee mile back!" said the Chinaman, when he saw a toboggan for the first time. This apt remark of the Celestial comes pretty near to describing accurately the impressions of most people when they take their first toboggan ride. There seems to be some subtle attraction about the sport that works its magic spell over any one who has once sped swiftly over the glistening snow on our northern hillsides. There is, indeed, something very fascinating about this form of winter sport. The longing to make a swift descent down a steep hill, when they know that they are reasonably free from danger, cannot be resisted by the most timid when once they have been initiated, as it were. Even women and young children, whom it is difficult to persuade to take a seat on a toboggan for the first time, find intense enjoyment in the sport after their fears have worn off and they discover how really delightful it is. When the course begins at a high point, and the grade is pitched at a considerable angle, the toboggan flies over the ground with great swiftness, the snow being dashed up like spray at the prow of a vessel several feet in the air. Sometimes there is a spill, but it is not dangerous, as in bob-sledding, and adds to the zest of the sport. Every one should be dressed for the occasion in heavy garments, with a thick comforter around his neck and leggings on his legs, so that the snow cannot get inside and wet the skin. The long walk back to the starting-point gives one sufficient exercise to keep the blood in proper circulation, so that there is little danger of catching cold.

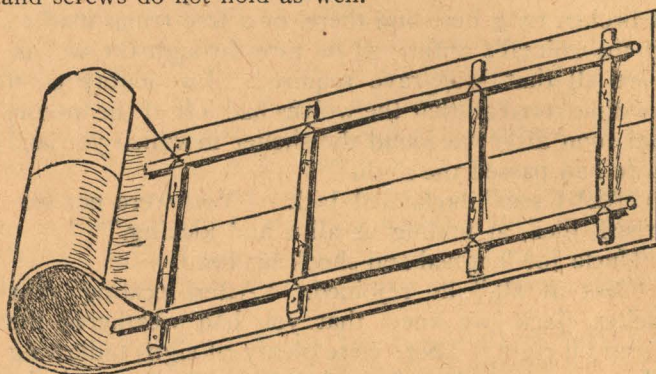
The home of tobogganing on this continent is, of course, in Canada, and a few of the States along the border-line. The Canadians have regular clubs devoted solely to this sport. It is a passion with them, as golf is with Scotchmen.

The little boys in Quebec have a primitive kind of toboggan, which they use to ride down the steep hills of their native city. It is made out of a barrel stave, which has a piece of wood about two inches square and eighteen inches high fastened securely in the middle. On the top of this is nailed a crosspiece for a seat, upon which the happy youngster sits as he sails down-hill, steering the queer-looking contrivance with his toe. Any boy who has a barrel stave, two pieces of wood, and a few nails, can make a toboggan like this.

The North American Indians first used toboggans for hauling heavy loads over the snow. So, you see, they were originally designed for a practical purpose, like snow-shoes, which we told you about last week, and have now been taken up by civilized persons as a recreation. The Indian toboggan was made of basswood or birch.

Thin strips were used in its construction, being held in place by crosspieces about an inch high, lashed securely with thongs of deer or moose hide. Frequently strong gut was made to answer the purpose. The toboggan curved up at the ends, the front having a kind of roll. The body of the affair measured about twelve feet in length in some instances, while many of them were as short as four or five feet. Sixteen or eighteen inches was the usual width. The Indian would put all his worldly possessions on his toboggan and journey to another locality, with so little concern that house-moving appeared to have no terrors for him.

To the boy who likes to make things, and takes a pride in the productions of his own handicraft, the toboggan presents opportunities for the exercise of his skill. Take two pieces of pine boards a quarter of an inch thick and ten or twelve feet long, and join them with round cross-sticks, as you see in the illustration. Use thongs of raw-hide to bind them to the body of the toboggan, for nails and screws do not hold as well.

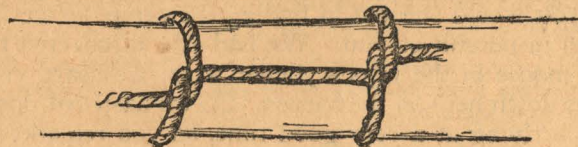


A HOME-MADE TOBOGGAN.

Have the thongs pass through holes in the bottom boards and around the sticks. At the same time, make grooves, so that the pieces of hide will not protrude from the bottom. This should have a clean, level surface. The knots made from the thongs would not only impede the progress of the toboggan, but would soon wear out, whereupon your handiwork would fall apart like the famous one-horse shay. Two side boards are lashed on top of the cross sticks. Then the ends at the front are turned up and held in place with thongs. There is your complete toboggan ready for use. Take it out on the nearest hill and try it to see how it works. If the directions have been faithfully followed, there will be no difficulty in handling it. You will have as much enjoyment as if it were one bought from a manufacturer, and will find that it is fully as serviceable.

In following the directions just given you, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that when your toboggan is finished, and looks like the one in the illustration, it will be just like those made by the Indians in Canada.

In tying the thongs, it is perhaps well to remember that the "hammock hitch" is the best form of knot to use.



A "HAMMOCK HITCH" KNOT.

It permits the thongs to be drawn tight, and will hold the various parts of the toboggan in their proper places. We

(Continued on page 30.)

A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

I have just finished reading No. 39 of your ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY. I think the stories are good. I have read all the issues to the present date, and they are second only to the famous *Tip Top Weekly*. I buy these two books each week, and think they are the only good five-cent stories for boys to read. I like the baseball and football stories best, because I play these two games most. I would like to ask a few questions. I weigh 98 pounds, am 5 feet 3 inches tall, and 13 years old. 1. How much should I weigh in proportion to my height? 2. How can I increase in weight? Every time I bend my right knee it cracks. I do not know what is the cause of its cracking. 3. How do you think I could stop this cracking? Hoping to see this in print, I give three cheers for the Winner Library Company and Maurice Stevens, and remain,

H. N. G.

St. Paul, Minn.

1. You should weigh about one hundred and sixteen pounds.
2. It is not a difficult thing to be able to increase your weight if you observe a few simple rules. Use no stimulants, not even tea or coffee; keep regular hours, and get eight hours' sleep; take exercise every day, and eat fat-producing food, like roast beef, mutton, ham, and bacon, oatmeal; vegetables, such as potatoes and beans, and plenty of Graham bread, and take a sponge bath in the morning after exercising.

As I have read every number of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, I thought I would write something about the boys and girls of Cranford. I think Phil Kirtland is a very nice fellow, but I think Jack is the man for the place he fills as captain of the team. And I think Nellie is the girl for Jack. I would like to ask you a few questions in regard to the people of Cranford. Is there such a fellow as Jack Lightfoot and his friends? And also, is there such a place as Cranford? If so, in what part of the United States is it located? Good luck to Mr. Stevens.

Yours truly,

GEORGE JONES.

Morgantown, W. Va.

Jack Lightfoot certainly seems very much alive when we are constantly asked by our readers if he exists. If you look up Cranford on any map you will find out where the town is located.

I have been a reader of your delightful little weekly for some time, and I can hardly wait till it comes, which is on Friday. I like all the characters except Phil Kirtland, Brodie Strawn, and Brodie's sister Kate. Jerry is the boy; but we hear so little of him that we forget there is such a fellow half the time. I move we have more of him in the future. There is just one thing missing, and that is a jolly and funny fellow to make fun like in *Tip Top*. Their names are Jack Ready and Ted Smart. I think it would be a good idea, and I think most of the readers will think the same. The baseball stories were fine, but the football stories are better. I am lame and have to walk on a crutch, and can't play such games, so I have to take pleasure

watching others and reading about them. What would you advise me, a young man of twenty years old, five and one-half feet, to do to expand my chest? I measure thirty-two inches around, and I can hardly expand it an inch. I am collecting souvenir post-cards, and would like to exchange them with readers of ALL-SPORTS. I will promise to send card for card. Give my regards to Jack and Tom Lightfoot, also Lafe Lamp-ton and Nellie Conner. My address is PERCY W. HAMILTON.

185 Third Street, East Liverpool, Ohio.

Your suggestions are good ones, and may be considered by Mr. Stevens some time in future numbers. If you take deep-breathing exercises five minutes every morning and again at night just before going to bed, your chest expansion will improve. You must persevere, however, for it cannot be accomplished in a few weeks' time.

I wish to ask you a few questions. 1. How can I strengthen my ankles? 2. Would like to know how to obtain a quick start from the pistol in running matches. 3. How to enlarge my chest. 4. Is twenty-seven feet a good put for a fellow of fourteen years of age, with a twelve-pound shot. I remain, a true admirer of Jack, yours truly,

JAMES E. LYNCH.

29 East One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Street, New York.

1. To strengthen the ankles, raise the heels from the floor, so that the weight of the body will be thrown forward on the balls of the feet. Do this every morning till it tires you. The muscles of the ankles and calves will be greatly benefited if you continue this exercise regularly night and morning for a few months.

2. The secret lies in having the weight of the body evenly balanced as you are on the scratch waiting for the signal. The body should incline slightly forward, so as to give the runner the advantage of propelling force derived from his spring the moment he starts for the goal. For this reason, assume a crouching position while waiting for the pistol-shot.

3. Pulley weights and deep-breathing exercises will enlarge your chest.

4. It is very good for a young man of your age.

Not seeing any letter from my city lately, I thought I would write you one, and let you know what I thought of ALL-SPORTS.

It is certainly the peer of all weeklies, barring none. Jack is certainly an ideal for any boy or young man. Lafe is all right, too; so are some of the others; but I think, after modest Jack, I like Saul Messenger best, on account of his pluck. I must admit that Saul is somewhat of a bully, but I believe that his heart is as big as his head, and that he would cut off his right hand if he thought it would do Jack any good. By the way, what is the matter with Saul? I have not seen anything about him lately. I make bold to make this prophecy: that Fighting Saul will be, barring Jack, the best player on the football team. Hoping Mr. Stevens will give me a little more of Saul, I will close now, with my best wishes to ALL-SPORTS. Yours very truly,

Philadelphia, Pa.

I. B. WRIGHT.

We are glad to see that you do not intend that Philadelphia shall be left out in this column. Our numerous readers in the Quaker City will probably follow your lead, now that you have shown them the way. Jack Lightfoot is a young man who commands the respect and admiration of all our readers. His manliness, his square-dealing, and his ability to do unusual things make him a character to excite the interest and approval of every one who reads about him. You have made a good choice in picking him out as your ideal.

I have been a reader of ALL-SPORTS since the first number came out, and can say that I like it better than any other paper I ever read. I keep my copy till night comes, and then sit by a cozy wood-fire on the old-fashioned hearth in our house these cool evenings. In the daytime I feel that it is better for me to stay outdoors after school as much as possible to get the fresh air. Then when night comes, and I have got my lessons for the next day, I take out my beloved ALL-SPORTS and read till it is time for me to go to bed. It will soon be time for winter sports, and I would like to become an expert skater. Will you kindly give me some hints as to how I can learn to be a good ice-skater? We think of organizing a skating club in this town, and my friends who also read your wonderful weekly told me to ask "An Old Athlete" for some hints as to how to become good skaters. I think that ours will be the first skating club—anyway, it is the first I ever heard of. We are going to practise and see if boys in nearby towns won't get interested enough to organize clubs, so that we can have contests. There is no fun in doing all these things if you can't get other teams to play against. As an ice-skating team is something of a novelty, I think that it ought to take well in our town, and in other towns, too. I have six boys already who are anxious to start the club with me. They are James Harris, Johnny Cofferth, Memming Jasper, Peter Smith, Patrick Hines, and myself. Before getting our skates for the season, I thought it better to write and ask you for a few points, so that we would know just how to go about this. Everybody I have asked to see what they think about my club idea say that it ought to be a good one.

WILLIAM BLAKESHAU.

Cincinnati, Ohio.

There is no reason why you could not organize an ice-skating team such as you mention. Five or six boys could have a great deal of fun during the winter days, when the ice is thick and the cool, invigorating air calls for brisk exercise. Each member should first practise the simple movements by himself until he has mastered them. Of course the best skater will be elected as the captain of the team. Then the captain of the team should gather the boys together, and all the members practise under his direction. The attainment of a reasonably high rate of speed should be the first thing to try for.

Mark off a starting-point at one end of the pond, or river, where the members of the club meet, and begin with short distances—for instance, a quarter of a mile. The first day's practise might consist in skating over a course of this length. Some of the boys doubtless would find that they were quite tired when evening came, after putting in an hour or two in such a manner, but in a few days their muscles would become sufficiently hardened to enable them to skate much greater distances without being exhausted. It is surprising how soon the soreness of the first day's skating wears off when one enters into the spirit of the exercise and becomes an enthusiast. You will find that you are able to go a number of miles without getting fagged out.

After the team gets so that its members can skate three or four miles and keep up a pretty good speed, the captain should pick out the two best skaters and have them train to meet the cracks from teams in other towns. If several teams in nearby towns or cities like this were organized, and had tournaments at frequent intervals during the season, it would arouse considerable interest, not only among the members, but among the people living in the places where these teams met.

A number of good skaters would undoubtedly be developed by these contests. Anyway, every one engaged in the practise would at least find the exercise good sport. It is necessary for you to remember that during these cold, blustering days it is an easy thing for you to catch cold if not properly clothed. Heavy woolen underclothing should be worn instead of some of the lighter fabrics so often used during cold weather. An extra thick stocking should take the place of those of moderate weight; as a matter of fact, two pairs of stockings would not come amiss.

Over a heavy winter suit wear an overcoat as short as possi-

ble. One that comes only to the hips is the best, so that there is free action for the legs. The kind that looks like an old-fashioned pea-jacket will give more satisfaction than anything we know of in the way of overcoats, because it admits of absolutely free movement on the part of the skater, at the same time keeping him as warm as garments having a different kind of cut. Some skaters prefer sweaters and knickerbockers. Wear double-soled shoes.

As I have not seen a letter from Ironton to the ALL-SPORTS, I thought I would write one. The ALL-SPORTS is a fine weekly. Jack Lightfoot is a good all-around athlete. Wilson Crane thought he would make a fine president, but he found out that Jack had a few friends. Three cheers for Lafe Lampton, the boy who is always hungry. Tom Lightfoot is a fine runner, but Jack beats them all. Three cheers for Jubal, Bob, Brodie, Phil and all the rest. Hoping to see this in print, I remain, sincerely yours,

JOHN STEELE.

Ironton, Ohio.

It was very kind of you, John, to remember us in this way. We should like to receive more letters from your town.

(*"How to do Things"*)—Continued from page 28.

have included a design of one in the illustration, so you can see how easily they are tied.

An important thing to observe in tobogganing is the kind of hill you select for your coast. In cities where it is very popular there are regular toboggan-slides made of heavy timber, which are kept in proper condition by attendants for those indulging in the game of "Zip! Walkee a mile back."

But people who are not within reach of such luxurious appliances have to depend upon nature's gifts in the way of a steep hill free from dangerous obstructions. This means that you will be obliged to do a little hunting in your neighborhood to find the ideal spot. Choose a hill whose summit is quite high, with a long, gentle slope near the base. You want to get as much momentum at the start as possible, so that the carrying powers of the toboggan will not be hampered in any way. Of course, the best hill you find for your purpose will have more or less hillocks and hollows on its slope. But if they are small it will not be hard work to fill out the hillside with snow and give it a smooth and even surface. Three or four energetic boys could do this after school. The time spent in this way would be amply repaid by the increased pleasure you would derive from the wonderful speed given to the toboggan.

The snow should be packed hard, not only in the hollows, but all along the slide, from top to bottom. If it looks like a cold night, and will probably freeze, it would not be a bad idea to pour a few buckets of water over the snow, so that there will be a hard coating of frozen snow the next morning. With a slide like this to toboggan on you will fly over the ground so swiftly that it will take your breath away. But speed like this is the real joy of tobogganing; its chief charm lies in the ability to go over the ground so fast that it seems as if one were never going to stop, but sail on to the end of the earth and be launched into space.

Two or more generally ride on a toboggan, the person in the rear doing the steering with his toe as he half sits and half reclines on the end, keeping an eye ahead for danger spots.

Do not let the winter go by without saying that you have been tobogganing!

STIRRING SEA TALES

PAUL JONES WEEKLY



TORIES of the adventures of the gallant American hero, Paul Jones, in the battles he had with the British men-o'-war during the Revolution.

The history of his brave deeds forms some of the most interesting and brilliant pages in American history, and the stories which appear in "Paul Jones Weekly" are so fascinating and full of the spirit of patriotism that no real boy can resist the temptation to read them.

LIST OF TITLES

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|---|--|
| 1—Paul Jones' Cruise for Glory; or, The Sign of the Coiled Rattlesnake. | 11—Paul Jones' Double; or, Cruise of the <i>Floating Feather</i> . |
| 2—Paul Jones at Bay; or, Striking a Blow for Liberty. | 12—Adrift with Paul Jones; or, The Last of the Lagoon Pirates. |
| 3—Paul Jones' Pledge; or, The Tiger of the Atlantic. | 13—Paul Jones Against Odds; or, The Story of a Wonderful Fight. |
| 4—Paul Jones' Bold Swoop; or, Cutting Out a British Supply Ship. | 14—Paul Jones' Sealed Orders; or, Special Duty in the Caribbees. |
| 5—Paul Jones' Strategy; or, Outwitting the Fleets of Old England. | 15—Paul Jones Among the Redcoats; or, The Fight off Tobago. |
| 6—Paul Jones' Long Chase; or, The Last Shot in the Locker. | 16—Paul Jones and the Letter of Marque; or, Clipping the Tiger's Claws. |
| 7—Out with Paul Jones; or, Giving Them a Bad Fright Along the English Coast. | 17—Paul Jones' Running Fight; or, A Blow for Freedom at Old Nassau. |
| 8—Paul Jones Afloat and Ashore; or, Stirring Adventures in London Town. | 18—Paul Jones' Secret Foe; or, Traitors Aboard the <i>Providence</i> . |
| 9—Paul Jones' Swamp Trail; or, Outwitting the Coast Raiders. | 19—The Cruise of the <i>Eagle</i> ; or, Rescued by Paul Jones. |
| 10—Paul Jones' Defiance; or, How the Virginia Planter Invaded "Robbers' Roost." | 20—Paul Jones Among the Slaves; or, The <i>Portland's</i> White Captive. |

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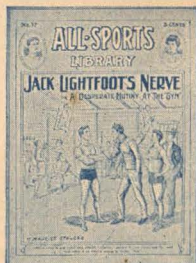
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| 20—Jack Lightfoot in Camp; or, Young Athletes at Play in the Wilderness. | 37—Jack Lightfoot's Nerve; or, A Desperate Mutiny at the "Gym." |
| 21—Jack Lightfoot's Disappearance; or, The Turning-up of an Old Enemy. | 38—Jack Lightfoot's Halfback; or, Playing the Giants of the League. |
| 22—Jack Lightfoot's "Stone Wall" Infield; or, Making a Reputation in the League. | 39—Jack Lightfoot's Gridiron Boys; or, Leading a Patched-up Team to Victory. |
| 23—Jack Lightfoot's Talisman; or, The Only Way to Win Games in Baseball. | 40—Jack Lightfoot's Trap Shooting; or, Up Against the Champions of the Gun Club. |
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| 27—Jack Lightfoot's Iron Arm; or, How the New "Spit" Ball Worked the Charm. | 44—Jack Lightfoot's Duck-Blind; or, A Strange Mystery of the Swamp. |
| 28—Jack Lightfoot on the Mat; or, The Jiu-Jitsu Trick that Failed to Work. | 45—Jack Lightfoot's Luck; or, Glorious Days of Sport Ahead. |
| 29—Jack Lightfoot's All-Sports Team; or, How Lafe Lampton Threw the Hammer. | 46—Jack Lightfoot's Triumph; or, Back from a Watery Grave. |
| 30—Jack Lightfoot in the Box; or, The Mascot that "Hoodooed" the Nine. | 47—Jack Lightfoot Down in Dixie; or, The Voyage of a Single-Hand Cruiser. |
| 31—Jack Lightfoot's Lucky Find; or, The New Man Who Covered "Short." | 48—Jack Lightfoot's Plans; or, Wrecked on Indian River. |
| 32—Jack Lightfoot, Archer; or, The Strange Secret an Arrow Revealed. | 49—Jack Lightfoot on Snowshoes; or, The Chase of the Great Moose. |
| 33—Jack Lightfoot's Cleverness; or, The Boy Who Butted In. | 50—Jack Lightfoot Snowed-Up; or, Lost in the Trackless Canadian Wilderness. |
| 34—Jack Lightfoot's Decision; or, That Chestnut of "Playing Against Ten Men." | 51—Jack Lightfoot's Enemies; or, A Fight to the Finish. |
| 35—Jack Lightfoot, Pennant-Winner; or, Winding up the Four Town League. | 52—Jack Lightfoot at Seagirt; or, New Friends and Old Foes. |
| 36—Jack Lightfoot's Pledge; or, Bound in Honor. | 53—Jack Lightfoot's Hazing; or, Tricking the Tricksters. |
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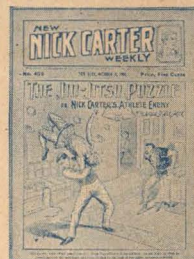
TIP TOP WEEKLY



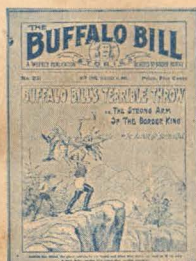
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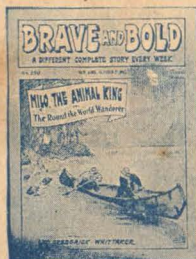
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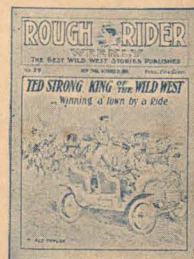
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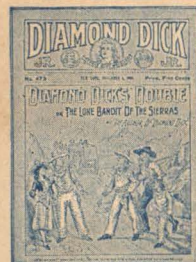
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